THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER 1989
$2.00 U.S.
$2.50 CAN.

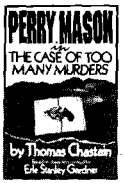
10 PERFECTLY EXECUTED STORIES

Including
Simon Brett
Dorothy Salisbury Davis

Simon Brett
(see page 84)

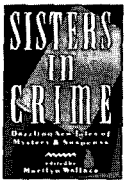
0 387166 9

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



1560 $14.95 **$6.98**

★0539 $19.95 **$8.50**



7005 Sp. Ed. **$8.98**

1487 $18.95 **$11.50**

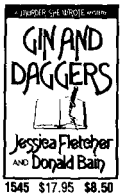
6833 $17.95 **$7.98**

1289 $13.95 **$8.98**

7062 Sp. Ed. **$8.50**

DYING FOR A GOOD MYSTERY?

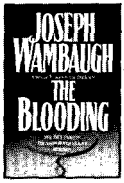
1388 $17.95 **$10.95**



1545 $17.95 **$8.50**

8284 Sp. Ed. **$9.98**

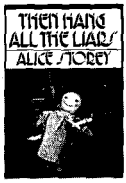
1743 $19.95 **$11.95**



★6767 $18.95 **$8.50**

MYSTERY GUILD

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF THE WORLD'S BEST MYSTERIES.



7047 Sp. Ed. **$7.98**

7021 $17.95 **$7.98**

TAKE ANY 6 BOOKS FOR 99¢

WITH MEMBERSHIP

Here's how the Mystery Guild works:

You'll receive your 6 masterful mysteries plus a FREE Tote Bag as soon as your membership is accepted. (We reserve the right to refuse any application.) We'll bill you later for just 99 cents, plus shipping and handling.

About every 4 weeks (14 times a year), you'll get a new issue of our exclusive magazine, offering fascinating Featured Selections and dozens of Alternates — even exclusive editions offered only by the Mystery Guild. Plus, up to 2 times a year, we'll send offers of Special Selections.

If you want the Featured Selections, do nothing; we'll send them automatically. If you'd like an Alternate, or no book, return the reply form by the date specified. A shipping and handling charge is added to each order. If you ever receive unwanted books because you had less than 10 days to decide, return them at our expense.

You need buy just 4 more books at regular low Mystery Guild prices within one year — after which you may cancel at any time.

You'll receive complete, hardcover editions — sometimes altered in size to fit special presses and save you even more.

And always, your satisfaction is guaranteed. If you're not enthralled with your 6 introductory books, return them within 10 days at our expense. Your membership will be canceled and you won't owe a cent. The Tote is yours to keep in any case.

NOTE: *Prices in fine print are publishers' edition prices. Guild members pay prices listed in bold print.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

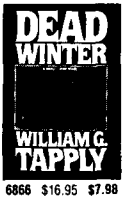
★6841 $18.95 $6.98

6817 $17.95 $8.50

★6809 $18.95 $8.50

1651 $12.95 $8.50

6999 $15.95 $8.50



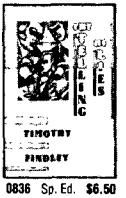
6866 $16.95 $7.98

1511 $16.95 $6.98

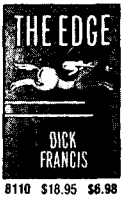
6924 $15.95 $7.50

6775 $17.95 $7.98

6825 $14.95 $6.98



0836 Sp. Ed. $6.50



8110 $18.95 $8.98

8151 $16.95 $7.50

6221 $17.95 $6.98

6783 $15.95 $6.98

8029 Sp. Ed. $7.98

8060 $16.95 $7.98

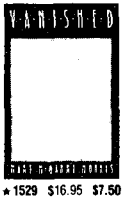
8052 $17.95 $7.98

8078 $17.95 $6.98

1198 $17.95 $6.98

1305 $18.95 $8.50

8094 Sp. Ed. $8.98



★1529 $16.95 $7.50

8011 $16.95 $7.50

★ Explicit scenes and language may be offensive to some.

FREE TOTE
with membership

MYSTERY GUILD®

Garden City, NY 11535

☐**Yes!** Enroll me in the Mystery Guild under the terms outlined in this ad. I agree to buy 4 more books at regular low Club prices within one year.

Write in code numbers of your 6 choices above.

ES303

Mr./Mrs. _____

Miss/Ms. _____

Address _____ Apt. No. _____

City/State/Zip _____

If under 18, parent must sign. _____

Members accepted in the U.S.A. and Canada. Canadian members will be serviced from Canada, where offer differs slightly. Membership applications subject to approval.

35-MG55

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Don't Miss Out on the Second Annual Davis Mystery Magazines' Mystery Cruise '90 February 10 to 17, 1990 Aboard Holland America Cruise Line's Fabulous Luxury Liner M.S. *Noordam*

There's no mystery about the best way to experience seven sun-and-fun-filled days in the Caribbean. Enjoy the wonderful ports of San Juan, Puerto Rico; Tortola, British Virgin Islands; St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands; and Nassau, the Bahamas, all while sailing aboard one of the finest cruise ships afloat.

The best way to enjoy a mystery is to be a part of one! There will be crimes to solve, trivia contests, movie classics, great prizes, gifts, parties, and surprises galore.

We are pleased to announce that our two Edgar Award winning authors will be Ed Hoch and Bill Crenshaw. You will have an opportunity to meet both of these special guests and hear them speak about the "art of writing mysteries."

Book Early. Space Is Limited.

Prices for the mystery cruise include round-trip air fare and start at only $1279.00 per person, *double occupancy from most major cities.* There is limited availability in some accommodation categories. First come, first served.

To be part of this fabulous week and to receive all the special amenities, you must book your cruise through:

OMNI GROUP CRUISES, INC.
6513 Hollywood Boulevard, Hollywood, CA 90028
Write or call for more information (800) 876-OMNI

Please send me more information about Mystery Cruise '90

Name _____
(Please print)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone ( )

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Contents

THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE

ELLERY QUEEN®

Justina	Dorothy Salisbury Davis	**4**
A Dirge for Clowntown	James Powell	**18**
A Dark Corner	J. W. Whitehead	**36**
Under a Plum Tree	Allan Lloyd	**45**
Don't Know Much About Art	Simon Brett	**60**
The Jury Box	Jon L. Breen	**86**
The Gypsy Bear	Edward D. Hoch	**90**
Live It Up, Bert	Patricia Derozier	**105**
A Grave Mistake	Reynolds Phillips	**111**
The Drop	William Bankier	**121**
Ted Bundy's Father	Ruth Graviros	**134**

On our cover is SIMON BRETT

Cover photograph by Peter Papadopolous

Parade axe courtesy of E. Buk Antiques

Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Note: indicia on page 159

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story about Julie Hayes by

DOROTHY SALISBURY DAVIS

"That was one spooky place," Julie said of the basement at the Willoughby. "Cobwebs and leaky pipes, and the smell of mold and old clothes when your actor friend opened the trunk."

"It's all changed down there now with the renovation," Mrs. Ryan told her. "The old part's been sealed off. There's brand new washers and dryers in the new section and it's as bright as daylight."

"Sister Justina wouldn't be stealing from the dryers, would she?" Julie asked. "To give to the poor, of course."

"She would not," Mrs. Ryan said indignantly. "Besides, she'd be taking a terrible chance of being caught."

Our first story from Dorothy Salisbury Davis about New York Daily *columnist Julie Hayes. The fourth in her series of novels about Julie, from Scribners, is* The Habit of Fear . . .

JUSTINA

by DOROTHY SALISBURY DAVIS

Mary Ryan was certainly not homeless. She had lived in the Willoughby for forty-three years. Once it had been a residential hotel occupied mainly by show folk, people who worked in or about the theater at subsistence or slightly higher level. Recently it had been renovated into a stylish cooperative, but with a few small inside pockets, you might say, of people like Mrs. Ryan, who were allowed to remain on as renters by the grace of a qualified managerial charity: after all, what can you put in an inside pocket? Besides tax rebates.

The neighborhood—the West Forties of Manhattan—had gone, in

© 1989 by Dorothy Salisbury Davis.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mrs. Ryan's time, from respectable working-class to shabby and drug-pocked misery and back again to a confusing mix of respectability, affluence, and decay. But through all the changes, the area had remained a neighborhood, with people who had lived there all their lives loyal to one another, to the shops who served them, to church and school, and who were, by and large, tolerant of the unfortunates and the degraded who came and went among them with the inevitability of time and tide.

As Mrs. Ryan got out of the elevator that January morning, she saw the nun backing off from the doorman. Louis seemed to be trying to persuade her to go out of the building by demonstrating how it could be done. He would prance three or four feet ahead of her toward the door and beckon her to follow him. The nun would take a step away from him deeper into the lobby.

Mrs. Ryan had seen the nun in the building before, and she had seen her on the street, always hurrying, always laden with nondescript bundles and shopping bags. She was tall and lean and wore a habit such as most orders had stepped out of years before. Nor could Mrs. Ryan associate her garb with that of any order in her long religious acquaintanceship. "Is there any way I can help you, Sister?" she asked when she came abreast of the nun and the doorman.

"Better you can help me," Louis said, pleading with empty hands. "The super says she's not to come in, but she is in."

"You ought to show respect, Louis. A Sister is a Sister. You don't speak of her as *she*."

The nun gazed at Mrs. Ryan with large china-blue eyes that were full of pleading. "Can he put me out if I'm waiting for a friend?"

"Certainly not," Mrs. Ryan said.

Louis started to walk away in disgust and then turned back. "Miss Brennan left the building an hour ago in her nurse's uniform. Wouldn't you say it would be a long wait till she comes back, Mrs. Ryan?"

"Sheila Brennan is a friend of mine," Mrs. Ryan said. "If she said she'll be back, she'll be back. Would you like to come up to my place for a cup of tea, Sister? We can phone down to Louis and see if she comes in."

"How very kind of you, Mrs. Ryan. I would love a cup of tea." Moving with more grace than would be thought possible in the heavy, square-toed shoes, the nun collected two shopping bags from among the poinsettias. Mrs. Ryan hadn't noticed them. Whether

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Louis had, she couldn't know. He was standing, his back to them, looking out onto the street and springing up and down on his toes.

In the elevator, Mrs. Ryan surveyed her guest surreptitiously. She wore a full black skirt all the way to her shoe-tops and a jacket that seemed more Chinese than Christian. It buttoned clear up under her chin. The crucifix she wore was an ivory figure on what looked to be a gold or bronze cross. It put Mrs. Ryan in mind of one she had once noticed on a black man who, according to her friend Julie Hayes, was a pimp. For just that instant she wondered if she had done the right thing in inviting the nun upstairs. What reassured her was an association from her youth in Ireland: there was a smell to the nun only faintly unpleasant, as of earth or the cellar, but remembered all Mrs. Ryan's life from the Sisters to whom she had gone in infant school. Alas, it was the smell of poverty.

Over her head of shaggy brown hair, the nun wore a thin veil that came down to her breast. It was not much of a veil, but there was not much breast to her, either. She said her name was Sister Justina and her order was the Sisters of Our Lady of Hope, of whom there were so few left each was allowed to choose her own ministry: most, Sister Justina said, worked among the poor and the illiterate, and often lived with them, as she herself did.

What Mrs. Ryan called her apartment was a single room into which she had crammed a life, and which she had for many years shared with a dachshund recently gone to where the good dogs go. A life-size picture of Fritzie hung on the wall among a gallery of actors and directors and theater entrepreneurs. "There's not a face up there you'd recognize today, but I knew them all," she said, coming out of the bathroom where she'd put the kettle on to boil on the electric plate.

The nun was gazing raptly at the faded photographs. "Were you an actor?"

"I was an usher," Mrs. Ryan said proudly.

"Theater people are the most generous I've ever begged from. I am a beggar, you know," Justina said with a simplicity that touched Mrs. Ryan to the core. There was something luminous about her. She spoke softly, her voice throaty and low, but an educated voice.

"The Franciscans—I always give to the Franciscans," Mrs. Ryan said. It was the only begging order she knew.

"I feel closer to St. Francis myself than to any other saint," Sister Justina said. "Sometimes I pray for a mission among birds and animals, and then I'm reminded that pigeons are birds, and that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rats and mice must have come off the ark as well as the loftier creatures. But I think I do my best work among the poor who ought never to have come to the city at all. They are the really lost ones." She was sitting at the foot of the daybed, rubbing her hands together. The color had risen to her cheeks.

Mrs. Ryan thought of tuberculosis. "Don't you have a shawl, Sister?"

"I'm warm enough inside, thank you. I have so many calls to make, would you think it ungrateful of me to run off without waiting for tea?"

Or Sheila Brennan, Mrs. Ryan thought. But she had grown accustomed to visitors finding her apartment both claustrophobic and too warm. "The electric plate is terrible slow," she said, making an excuse for her guest's departure.

"You're very kind," the nun said. Her eyes welled up. "God bless!" She gathered a shopping bag in each hand and went flapping down the hall like a bird that couldn't get off the ground.

A few minutes later Mrs. Ryan was downstairs again, about to resume her trip to the Sentinal Thrift Shop. She lingered near the elevators until Louis went outdoors to look for a cab for one of the tenants with liquid assets, as Sheila Brennan liked to say of the co-op owners. She was not in the mood for a lecture from Louis, who couldn't stand street people, even if they belonged to a religious order. She was almost to the corner of Ninth Avenue when a gust of wind came up, whirling the dust before it. She turned her back, and so it was that she saw Sister Justina emerge from the service or basement entrance of the Willoughby. She clutched her veil against the wind and hurried toward Eighth Avenue, the opposite direction from Mrs. Ryan. And without her shopping bags.

Julie had the feeling that Mrs. Ryan had been waiting for her—not exactly lying in wait, but keeping an eye out for her to appear, either coming to or going from her ground-floor apartment on Forty-fourth Street. Theirs was a friendship of several years, recently broken and more recently mended. Julie still kept the tin box of dog biscuits in case the old lady appeared one day with another Fritzie in tow.

Mrs. Ryan came halloing across the street ahead of a rush of traffic. "Do you have a few minutes, Julie? There's something I need your advice on."

Julie had a few minutes. She was of the conviction that a gossip columnist hustled best who hustled least. Her visit to the rehearsal

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of *Uptown Downtown* could wait. She unlocked the door and led the way back into her apartment-office.

"Do you remember the day we put down the deposit here, Julie?"

Julie remembered, but it seemed a long time ago, her brief sortie into reading and advising. Sheer mischief, she'd say of it now. Now "the shop," as she'd always called it, was comfortable to live in and equipped as well with the electronics of her trade. She had learned to use the computer and rarely went near the *New York Daily* office at all.

"Friend Julie," Mrs. Ryan said, her voice lush with reminiscence. Then: "You have such good instincts about people. I want to tell you about a nun I met this morning, a beautiful person, the most spiritual eyes you ever saw." Mrs. Ryan didn't exactly proselyte, but she did propagate the faith.

"I'm not great on nuns," Julie said, and the phrase "a nun and a neck" popped into her mind. Where it had come from she had no idea.

"They're not much different from you and me," Mrs. Ryan said.

Julie raised her eyebrows.

"Her name is Sister Justina," Mrs. Ryan said, and told the story of their encounter.

"Are you sure she's a nun?" was Julie's first question.

"I'd swear to it."

"What does Miss Brennan say about her?"

"Sheila's on the day shift this week—I wouldn't go to the hospital looking for her about this. It's the shopping bags that bother me. What did she do with them?"

"And what was in them? You've got to think about drugs, Mrs. Ryan."

"It crossed my mind, may the Lord forgive me, and I suppose, to be honest, I'd have to say that's why I've come to you."

"It would seem she wanted most to get into the Willoughby," Julie reconstructed. "She tried to make it on Miss Brennan's name and then you came along. It looks as though her purpose was to deliver the shopping bags, but without the doorman or you knowing who she was delivering them to."

Mrs. Ryan agreed reluctantly.

"How did she get past the doorman in the first place?"

"She must have slipped in the way I slipped out—when he was handing someone into a cab."

"Were the bags heavy or light?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"They flopped along, not heavy, not light."

"And why go out the basement door? Why not sail past the doorman with her head in the air?"

"Ah, she wasn't the type. She told me right out that she was a beggar—but in the way St. Francis was a beggar."

"Funny about that cross," Julie said. "I saw Goldie the other day. 'Miz Julie, I'm straight as a flagpole,' " she mimicked. "He even gave me his business card."

"Was he wearing the crucifix?" Mrs. Ryan asked disapprovingly.

Julie grinned. "I doubt it. He was wearing Brooks Brothers." She took a mug of tea from the micro-oven and set it before the older woman.

"Fancy," Mrs. Ryan said, "and me still using an electric plate." The tea was "instant" and she hated it.

Julie wondered how many like Mrs. Ryan and Sheila Brennan were still living in the Willoughby. "What was the name of your actor friend? Remember he took us down to the basement that time to look up his old notices in the trunk room?"

"Jack Carroll. He's gone now, God rest him. He was a lovely man but a terrible bore." Mrs. Ryan drank the tea down, trying not to taste it.

"That was one spooky place," Julie said. "Cobwebs and leaky pipes, and the smell of mold and old clothes when he opened the trunk."

"It's all changed down there now with the renovation. The old part's been sealed off. There's brand new washers and dryers in the new section and it's as bright as daylight."

"She wouldn't be stealing from the dryers, would she? To give to the poor, of course."

"She would not," Mrs. Ryan said indignantly. Then, having to account to herself for the shopping bags, she added, "Besides, she'd be taking a terrible chance of being caught."

"But wouldn't that account for her going out without the bags—the fear that someone had seen her?"

"Oh, dear, I hope she doesn't come looking for me now to let her back in," Mrs. Ryan said. "I could be out in the cold myself. I'm on severance with the management. They pretend not to know I cook in my room."

"Mrs. Ryan," Julie said, "why don't you forget I said that? It's wild. I have a wicked imagination. And I'd stop worrying about the nun if I were you. She got into the building before you came along—she's not your responsibility."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mrs. Ryan looked at her reproachfully. Then her face lit up. "Julie, I'd love you to meet her. I'll bring her around someday if I can get her to come and let you judge for yourself."

Sheila Brennan stuck her stockinged feet out for Mrs. Ryan to see. "Will you look at my ankles? You'd think it was the height of summer." The ankles were indeed swollen.

"It's being on them all day," Mrs. Ryan said. "Put them up on the couch while I pour the tea."

Sheila was younger than Mrs. Ryan, a plain, solid woman who dreaded the day of her retirement from St. Jude's Hospital. "The first I saw of Sister Justina was when she visited someone brought into the hospital with frostbite during that bad spell in December. You know the woman who tries to sell yesterday's newspapers on the corner of Fifty-first Street? The police brought her in half frozen. I told the nun that if she'd come to the Willoughby when I got off duty, and if she could promise me the woman would wear it, I'd give her a fisherman's shirt my brother brought me from Donegal. It was foolish of me to put a condition to it and what she said made me ashamed of myself. 'If she doesn't wear it, I will,' she said. I've been asking around of this one and that one to give her their castoffs ever since."

"So she's on the up and up," Mrs. Ryan said and put the teacup and saucer in her friend's hand. "But what was she doing in the Willoughby basement?"

"God knows, Mary. She may just have pushed the wrong elevator-button and wound up there."

Julie and her imagination, Mrs. Ryan thought.

Sheila Brennan's explanation satisfied Mrs. Ryan because she wanted to be satisfied with it. And she did believe the nun to be a true sister to the poor. She saw her again later that week. Mrs. Ryan was herself in the habit now of taking her principal meal at the Seniors Center in St. Malachy's basement, where she got wholesome food in a cheerful environment at a price she could afford. Afterward, that afternoon, she went upstairs to the Actors Chapel and there she encountered Sister Justina kneeling in a back pew, her shopping bags at her sides.

"Sister—" Mrs. Ryan whispered hoarsely.

The nun jumped as though startled out of deep meditation and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

upset one of the shopping bags. Out tumbled a variety of empty plastic cups.

Mrs. Ryan went into the pew and helped her collect them, saying how sorry she was to have startled her. The containers, she noted, were reasonably clean, but certainly not new. "All I wanted to say," she explained, "is that I have a friend who would like to meet you. Her name is Julie Hayes. She's a newspaper columnist. She writes about all kinds of people, and she's very good to the needy."

"I've heard of her," the nun said without enthusiasm.

Mrs. Ryan realized she had taken the wrong tack. "Do you mind coming out to the vestibule for a minute? I can't get used to talking in church."

In the vestibule, she modified her description of Julie. "It's true that she helps people. She's even helped the police now and then. I know of at least two murders she's helped them solve. It would take me all day to tell you about her. But, Sister, she's as needy in her way as you are in yours. You both have a great deal to give, but what would you do if you didn't have takers?"

The nun laughed and then clutched at her throat to stop the cough the laugh had started. "Someday," she said when she could get her breath.

"Someday soon," Mrs. Ryan said. "She lives a few doors from the Actors Forum. You know where that is. I helped her find the place. In those days she called herself Friend Julie."

"Friend Julie," the nun repeated with a kind of recognition. Then: "I must hurry, Mrs. Ryan. They throw out the food if I don't get there in time." She ran down the steps with her bags of containers to collect the leftovers from the Seniors' midday meal.

"Nowadays it's just plain Julie Hayes," Mrs. Ryan called after her.

Julie never doubted that Mrs. Ryan would arrive one day with the nun by the hand, but what she hadn't expected was the nun's arrival alone. She didn't like unannounced visitors, but the ring of the doorbell was urgent and came with a clatter she presently attributed to the nun's use of the cross as a knocker. In fact, it was by the cross—an ivory figure on gold—that she recognized her as Mrs. Ryan's friend. She took off the safety latch and opened the door.

"Friend Julie, I need your help."

"Has something happened to Mrs. Ryan?"

"No," the nun said. "Please?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Julie relocked the door after the nun and led the way through the apartment. She was trying to remember the nun's name.

"Mrs. Ryan has nothing to do with this, I give my word," the nun said. "She said you wanted to meet me, but that's not why I'm here. I'm Sister Justina."

Julie motioned her into a chair and seated herself across the coffee table from her. She didn't say anything. She just waited for the pitch. It was those big blue eyes, she thought, that had got to Mrs. Ryan.

"All I need to tell you about my mission, I think, is that I try to find temporary shelter for street people who are afraid of institutional places. It's a small person-to-person endeavor, but I've had very good luck until now. I've been keeping two people hidden away at night and in bad weather in an abandoned section of the Willoughby basement."

"You're kidding," Julie said.

"I wish I were." The nun thrust her clasped hands between her knees. "I went to leave them a meal this afternoon." She took a deep breath. "One man was gone and the other one was dead. His skull was smashed in!" Her amazing eyes were filling.

"You're lucky it wasn't you, Sister."

"I don't consider myself lucky."

"Have you gone to the police?"

Justina shook her head. "That's why I came to you. Mrs. Ryan said you've helped the police—"

"Let's forget what Mrs. Ryan says. *You* have to go to the police. You can't just close up that part of the basement again on a dead man as though it was a tomb."

"I don't want to do that. I only wish I could have got poor Tim out of the city in time. He wanted to go, but he was afraid." She looked at Julie pleadingly. "I want to do what I have to do, but I can't."

"I'll go with you if that will help," Julie offered.

"Would you go *for* me?"

"No. If you don't show up and take the responsibility for trespassing or whatever it was, Mrs. Ryan and Miss Brennan could be evicted, and where would they find a place to live?"

Justina shook her head. "Nothing like this has ever happened to me."

"I'll say it again, then: you're lucky."

"Yes, I suppose I am," the nun said with what sounded like heavy

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

irony. "The habit I wear has been my salvation, my hope in life." She drew a long shuddering breath. "Julie, I'm a man."

For a while Julie said nothing. She was remembering where the phrase "a nun and a neck" had come from—the poet Rilke commenting on one of Picasso's acrobats: "The son of a nun and a neck."

"You can use the phone there on my desk if you want to, Sister," she said.

"Thank you," Justina said. She got up. "Who do I call?"

"Try nine-one-one," Julie said.

The nun identified herself to the police dispatcher as Sister Justina, told of a body in the basement of the Willoughby Apartments, and promised to wait herself at the service entrance to the building. She gave them the address.

When Mrs. Ryan dropped in at Billy McGowan's pub for her afternoon glass of lager, Detective Dom Russo was telling of the down-and-outer his detail had taken into custody that afternoon for trying to pass a kinky hundred-dollar bill. Nobody had seen its like since before World War Two. Billy had the first dollar he made in America framed and hung above the bar. He pointed it out to the custom.

"They don't make 'em like that any more," the detective said, wanting to get on with his story. "This gingo claimed first off that he found it, just picked it up off the street. We turned him loose and put a tail on him. You know where the old railroad tracks used to run under Forty-fourth Street? He made a beeline for a hole in the fence, slid down the embankment, and led us straight to where he'd hidden three plastic containers in an old burnt-out stove. I don't need to tell you—the containers were stuffed with all this old-fashioned money."

Someone down the bar wisecracked that that was the best kind. But at the mention of plastic containers, Mrs. Ryan could not swallow her beer.

"We took him in again. This time around, he said he found the money right there in the oven of this old stove. He intended to turn it over to the police, of course," Russo repeated sarcastically, "only first he wanted to look more respectable and went to a thrift shop with one of the C-notes—a silver certificate, they used to call them."

"He should have gone right to the bank," someone else down the bar said. "They'd trade it in—dollar for dollar."

"No questions asked?" someone wanted to know.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"He should have gone to a collector and made himself some real money," Billy said.

"Look," Russo told them, "you're acting like this guy was kosher. Maybe the *money's* kosher, but he's not. I don't believe for a minute he lucked into all that old cash. Anyway, we'll hold him till we hear from the Feds."

"A developing story, as they say." McGowan moved down the bar to Mrs. Ryan. "Drink up, Mary, and I'll put a head on it for you."

"I'll take a rain check, Billy," she told him. "I've got terrible heartburn." She eased herself off the stool, and by ancient habit looked under it, half expecting Fritzie to be curled up there. Out on the street, she drew several deep breaths of the wintry air. Plastic cups, she told herself, weren't such a rare commodity.

It was almost dark and there were misty halos around the streetlights—and when she turned the corner she could see rainbows of revolving color: police activity outside the Willoughby: She approached near enough to see that the action was concentrated around the basement entrance, whereupon she reversed herself and headed for Julie's as fast as her legs would carry her.

Julie was short on patience at the arrival of Mrs. Ryan. For one thing, she was uneasy about not having followed up on the nun's story. After all, she was in the newspaper business. She ought at least to have called the city desk on a breaking story. Or covered it herself. But she had wanted to give Justina a chance to confront the police on her own. She certainly didn't want to be the person to blow her cover.

When Mrs. Ryan finished giving out her jigsaw of a tale, Julie asked her if she'd seen Sister Justina after they'd met at St. Malachy's.

"I haven't."

"Well, she's been here this afternoon, Mrs. Ryan. The police are at the Willoughby to investigate a murder that took place there in the basement. It's highly possible they'll connect it with your man with the money in the plastic cups."

"Holy Mother of God," Mrs. Ryan said.

"And they'll be looking for witnesses, for accessories."

"Sister Justina?"

"And *her* accessories," Julie said. "Your doorman isn't about to take credit for letting her into the building, is he?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mrs. Ryan sat a long while in silence. "Would you mind walking me home, dear? My legs are so weak I'm not sure they'll carry me."

Julie pulled on her coat, put the phone on "Service," and fastened her press card onto the inside flap of her shoulderbag.

Mrs. Ryan got weaker and weaker on the way. She suggested they stop for a brief rest at McGowan's, but Julie put a firm hand beneath the older woman's elbow and propelled her homeward.

By then word of police activity at the Willoughby had reached McGowan's and most of the patrons were there to see what was going on. Julie spotted Detective Russo as he came out of the building on the run. She planted Mrs. Ryan among her McGowan's cronies at the barricade and caught up with him as he was climbing into the back of a squad car.

"Okay if I come along?" she asked, halfway into the car behind him. They were on pretty good terms, considering that they weren't always on the same side.

"Why not?" he said ironically.

By the time they reached the precinct house, she knew how the victim and his assailant had got into that part of the Willoughby. The Environmental Protection Department had ordered a removal of old sewage pipes and part of the wall had been removed, a temporary partition put up in its place. "Like everything else in this town," Russo said, "they get the job half done and move on to the next one."

No mention of the nun. "How did they get into the building in the first place, Dom?" Julie asked.

"How the hell do I know? Somebody must've left the door open. And no wonder. It stinks to high heaven down back where they were. They buried their own shit like animals. That's how they found the body—and the tin box with the money in it."

"The money in the plastic cups you found earlier this afternoon. Do you think there's a connection?"

"You better believe it," Russo said. "The victim had one clutched in his hand when he was clobbered with the tin box."

"How did you know to go to the Willoughby in the first place?"

"We had a phone call," Russo said. "But the complainant didn't show. We'd begun to think it was a hoax—"but the smell led us to him. A whole section of the wall—we just leaned on it and Jericho!"

"Jericho," Julie said. "That's nice."

So Justina had vanished. No problem: just get out of the habit and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

grow a beard. Until now she had carried Justina's confession of identity as a confidence, as though it had been told under a seal. It hadn't, of course, but since Detective Russo and company had the suspect in custody and enough evidence to detain him for a while, she decided to keep the matter on hold.

Mrs. Ryan and Sheila Brennan were waiting for Julie when she arrived at Mrs. Ryan's apartment. They seemed less chastened than she thought they ought to be, but there hadn't yet been time for the police to get to them.

"We're expecting them any minute," Mrs. Ryan said. "And we've decided to tell them the truth about Sister."

"And that is?"

"How she got into the building in the first place. How she used us."

Julie felt she was being used herself—that this was a dress rehearsal. "Okay."

"But she would have used anybody to help those she thought needed help." Mrs. Ryan drew a deep breath. "Julie, who would you say all that money belongs to?"

"I wouldn't say." But she was beginning to see a light.

"Sheila and I have a story to tell you. Remember you mentioned Jack Carroll the other day, and his trunk in the basement? Jack lived here for years before Sheila and I ever heard of the Willoughby and he loved to tell stories of the old days—the circus people, the vaudevillians, and the chorus girls. One of his best stories, and God knows he practiced to make it perfect, was about Big Frankie Malloy. When Frankie moved in, the management renovated a whole suite for him. He had tons of money. He had his own barber sent in every day to shave him, he had his meals catered, he was always sending out for this or that, he was a lavish tipper. And the girls, there were plenty of them. But there was something wrong about big Frankie. After he moved in, he never went outdoors again—except once.

"Madge Delaney was his favorite of the girls, and she got booked into the Blue Diamond nightclub just down the street. Frankie went out the night she opened. It was said afterward that the only reason she got the booking was to lure him out. He was shot dead before he ever got to the Blue Diamond."

"Wow," Julie said.

"Don't you think it could be his money that's been hidden away all these years?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

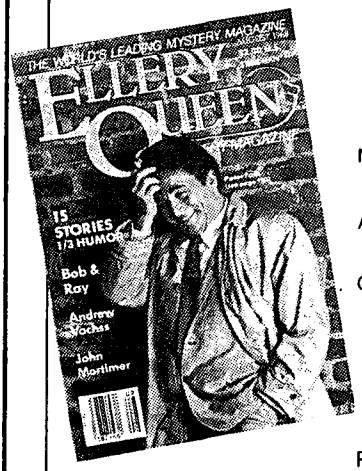
"It's a real possibility," Julie agreed.
"You see why I asked you who it belongs to now."
"I do see," Julie assured her.

Julie's story made page 3 of the bulldog edition of the *New York Daily* and the police, discovering there was no such religious order as the Sisters of Our Lady of Hope, put out an alert for Sister Justina. The Willoughby claimed all of that very old money. It also threatened to sue the contractor whose procrastination made that part of the basement available to Sister Justina and her friends.

Mrs. Ryan's faith in the nun remained steadfast: she might herself have got the name of the order wrong. Julie thought about looking up Goldie, the reformed pimp, to ask him what became of the gold-and-ivory cross he used to wear. But she decided not to. It was one more thing she didn't have to know.

"Q"

A special offer for mystery fans...



12 issues of ELLERY QUEEN for only $16.97
(Save 29% off the regular newsstand price)

☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Bill me
☐ Please renew my current subscription

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State____ Zip_____

For Immediate Subscription Service Call
TOLL FREE 1-800-333-3053
P.O. Box 7052 Red Oak Iowa 51591
Outside US and Poss. $19.97 (cash with order US funds).

Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for your first issue.

H7SC-9

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a ***NEW*** **short story by**

JAMES POWELL

"The doctor says the pie was poisoned," said Bozo. "Which would mean he got custard in his mouth or up his nose. Well, I can't buy that." One of the first things a clown learned was the right way to take a custard pie in the face. Just before impact you closed your mouth tightly and breathed out through your nose.

"Believe me, it was the finger schtick that did him in," insisted the delivery man.

The great clown, Josef Schtick, the originator of many little routines clowns still use, came up with the business in question as a follow-up to being hit with a custard pie. He would stand there, a forlorn laughingstock, with the mess sliding down his face. Then he would take a scoop of the custard on his forefinger, look at it curiously, taste it, smile, smack his lips, and start eating. Bozo cursed his own obtuseness. The finger schtick. Of course.

The 67th story in EQMM by James Powell, called by Marvin Lachman in Twentieth Century Crime and Mystery Writers *"the S. J. Perelman of the detective story . . . "*

A DIRGE FOR CLOWNTOWN

by JAMES POWELL

"Ringling-ringling!" shouted the bedside telephone. When he fumbled the receiver out of its cradle, a familiar voice at the other end of the line said, "We've got a live one, Inspector. Three seventy-one Pagliacci Terrace, Apartment 2C."

Forcing a grunt as close to "I'm on my way" as he could muster, the man in the bed got his feet on the floor and staggered toward the bathroom, hitting a chair and the doorjamb on the way. Grabbing

© 1989 by James Powell.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

two tight fistfuls of sink porcelain, he stared down at the drain for a long moment. Then he raised his head and saw himself in the mirror. By Jumbo, he looked as bad as he felt! The dead-white skin, the great bloody slash of smile, the huge round maraschino nose, the perfect black triangles of his eyebrows, the dead white skullcap with the two side-tufts of bright-orange hair. There he was, Clowntown's finest, Inspector Bozo of the Homicide Squad. Talk about a three-ring hangover! Bozo ran the tips of his trembling fingers across his cheek. A trip to Makeup was long overdue. Well, it would have to wait. When Homicide said they had a live one, they meant they had a dead one.

Splashing water on his face, Bozo hurried back to the bedroom. The clock-radio on the bedside table said 11:15 in the morning. Shaking his head at himself, he got into his baggy pants, pulled the suspenders up over his shoulders, and sat down on the edge of the bed to put on his long yellow shoes. (Shoe length indicated rank on the Clowntown force. When two deputy chiefs met toe to toe, they had to raise their voices to communicate.)

Next came the high celluloid collar with the big bow tie of fluorescent orange and purple lightning bolts. Then he slipped into the paddy-green-plaid trenchcoat with all the belts and flaps, tabs and buttons, and the three-pound brass police badge pinned to a lapel. Slapping the pockets to make sure he had his revolver and his bicycle horn, he headed for the front door. He took the expensive pearl-grey fedora from the hatrack, set it carefully and properly on his head, and stepped out into the hall. Years ago, when he'd designed his outfit, he could have chosen one of those little umbrellas with the water spout in the ferrule or a squirting flower as the finishing touch. Instead he'd picked this perfect hat, feeling it set off the rest of his exaggerated costume. Yes, all in all he'd put together a damn good act. Why was it starting to fall apart?

As he passed through the lobby, Bozo exchanged horn-honk greetings with the building superintendent. Outside, a crew of Sanitation Department clowns armed with pushbrooms were sweeping spotlights out of the gutters. The Saturday-morning street was cold and blustery beneath an elephant-grey sky. Clowntown's wind was legendary, with newspapers scuttling around every corner and flags snapping like tent canvas overhead. The rawness came with early December.

Bozo decided to walk. Pagliacci Terrace wasn't that far and he needed to clear his head. He stumbled going up a curb and felt his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nose budge. Damn, not that again. Almost twenty years on the force and the best nose he could afford was a wobbly mail-order number from Mr. Snoot. Last month, coming down the crowded city-hall steps with some buddies from Vice, the thing had dropped right off and gone bouncing high, wide, and handsome down the steps with Bozo cursing and chasing after it.

Oh, no one laughed. His embarrassed friends pretended not to notice. His Honor and the police chief and the rest of the brass looked the other way. They were all great admirers of his father, Big Bozo, who'd made the family name synonymous with clown. But Bozo knew they'd soon be clucking among themselves about how Big Bozo's boy was hitting the bottle, how he was going to seed, how he'd been in a tailspin since his divorce.

No, Bozo couldn't let that happen again. He made a mental note to have the nose looked after at the next sporting-goods store. The same people who custom-drilled the holes in bowling balls did nose refitting. And they always tried to sell him one of those flashy new Japanese noses all the trendy young clowns were wearing. But ever since the india-rubber-cartel people got their act together, the price of noses had gone through the roof.

Bozo reached the Pagliacci Terrace address and took the steps two at a time. The uniformed clown policeman guarding the apartment door saluted, using the hand holding his nightstick, rapping himself on the head and knocking his tall blue helmet askew. It was a stunt he did well and Bozo could see he was proud of it.

The dead clown lay on his back on the floor, toes pointed at the ceiling, the wreckage of a whole custard pie on his face. He was dressed in a convict's uniform of broad black and white horizontal stripes and brimless cap and had a black-plastic ball-and-chain shackled to one leg. Retrieving the victim's wallet, Bozo found the man's union card. He recognized the ferret face staring out at him from the photograph. Yes, he knew Clown Bunco very well. Like a few other clowns on the shady side of the law, Bunco, a small-time confidence man and hustler, had taken to wearing a convict outfit as if to openly challenge society and its values. Bozo glanced at the card again. Today was Bunco's birthday. Sending a friend a custard pie in the face on his birthday was an old Clowntown custom.

Over in the corner, the police medical examiner was cramming an immense cleaver, a butcher knife as big as a scimitar, and a vast hypodermic needle back into his black bag. "Well, Doctor?" asked

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG.
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bozo coldly as he knelt down to clear away some of the custard and make sure it really was Bunco under the mess. He'd never cared for the medical examiner. The man had fled Clowntown soon after graduating from the Emmett Kelly School of Medicine to take a fling at burlesque, slouching across the stage and leering at females in low comic routines. When burlesque died, he'd crept back, happy to eke out a living as a police medical examiner. His lewd eyebrows, glasses, red nose, and moustache looked made from one piece and he walked like his tie was caught in the zipper of his fly. For Bozo the man would always have the smell of the rim-shot about him.

"Strychnine," said the doctor. "A massive dose in the birthday boy's custard pie." Reading Bozo's look of disbelief, he gave a take-it-or-leave-it shrug and loped for the door, adding over his shoulder, "The delivery man's waiting for you in there."

Bozo followed the direction of the medical examiner's cocked thumb into the bedroom, where a clown wearing a bright-yellow bellboy's uniform sat waiting with a very depressed look. His chest was decorated with large brass buttons and the words MIDWAY BAKING COMPANY were printed in chartreuse on his pillbox hat. "What the hell happened?" demanded Bozo.

"Search me," said the delivery man in a reedy, nervous voice. "This was almost my last stop of the day. I parked my van on the street. Up I came and honked at his keyhole. When he opened the door, I was standing there holding the pie behind my back. 'Clown Bunco?' I asked. 'Yeah, so what?' sez he. 'So Happy Birthday,' sez I and I let him have it right in the kisser. You know, the secret of my marksmanship is never taking my eyes off the target.

"But it's funny the reaction you get in that split second while the pie's in the air. Clown A's pleasantly surprised. Clown B's smug—he's already had so many pies in the face he hasn't gotten the custard out of his ears from the last one and I know there are three more pie-delivery men stacked up out on the staircase. But Bunco there gave me the kind of look you don't see very often, a kind of tearing up in the eyes like he was remembering how long a time it had been since anybody'd remembered his birthday. Then the pie hit." The delivery man looked at Bozo helplessly. "Then he fell over dead."

"The doctor says the pie was poisoned," said Bozo. "Which would mean he got custard in his mouth or up his nose. Well, I can't buy that." One of the first things a clown learned was the right way to take a custard pie in the face. Just before impact you closed your mouth tightly and breathed out through your nose.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Believe me, it was the finger schtick that did him in," insisted the delivery man.

The great clown, Josef Schtick, the originator of many little routines clowns still use, came up with the business in question as a follow-up to being hit with a custard pie. He would stand there, a forlorn laughingstock, with the mess sliding down his face. Then he would take a scoop of the custard on his forefinger, look at it curiously, taste it, smile, smack his lips, and start eating. Bozo cursed his own obtuseness. The finger schtick. Of course.

Bozo sent the delivery man home, confident he couldn't have known the pie was poisoned. Clowns were totally incapable of causing direct physical harm to another person. That didn't mean a clown couldn't commit murder, only that he couldn't do it directly.

Bozo spent a good hour searching the apartment for something that might give him a clue to the murderer's identity. He found nothing until almost the last place he looked. In an envelope taped to the underside of the drawer in the telephone table, he discovered a manila envelope. Inside were a sheaf of sales receipts for furniture and other household furnishings made out to Bunco. He skimmed through them quickly. It was all expensive stuff and it wasn't anything here in the apartment. Strange.

But stranger still, why would a man hide sales receipts? Bozo made the envelope into a tube and stuffed it into his pocket. He left the apartment not sure what his next move should be. But back out on the sidewalk, he saw a Dinero's hamburger place across the street. All he'd found in Bunco's refrigerator was a wizened lemon and a moldy quart of buttermilk. Well, the guy had to eat somewhere. And that reminded Bozo he could use a shot of the feedbag himself.

The girl behind the lunch counter wore a blonde fright wig, a fashionable nose, an immense greasepaint smile, and, under her uniform, a big set of inflatable breasts. The portside one seemed to have a slow leak. When Bozo came in, she put down her copy of *Big Top Tid Bits* and ducked behind the coffee urn. He was sure he heard several strokes of a tire pump before she reappeared in full repair. "What'll it be?" she asked.

Bozo ordered his burger and sat watching the waitress prepare it. He knew her type well. The young girl fresh from Pratt Falls comes to Clowntown with stars in her eyes, so sure she'll land a job with the circus she can already smell the cotton candy. It ached to think

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

about it. It made him remember his ex-wife, Calliope. She'd been new in town, too, the first time he met her, and hell-bent to make her name in the circus. What a knockout she'd been, with her carrot-red hair done up in braids and her great big freckles and the tasteful way she'd only blacked out a single tooth.

Those first years of their marriage had been times of big change for Clowntown. Until then, the city'd been a solidly blue-collar community. A lot of clowns worked for Ringmeister, the center-city brewery, or in the textile mills of Clowntown Tinsel and Spangle. But one of the biggies bought out Ringmeister and closed it down and the Japanese computerized the hell out of the spangle industry. Center city declined and the clowns began their flight out to the suburbs, to Carneyville and Highwire.

Bozo and Calliope hadn't made the move. He was glad they hadn't. He had watched the suburban clowns trade in their floppy shoes for expensive sneakers and their baggy pants for designer jeans. And he saw their red-nosed faces at the commuter-train windows on the elevated tracks, looking sad—not clown sad, but stark, lonely, three-piece-suit sad. And he knew how their stories would end. Each year they'd buy a smaller-size nose until they got down to one no bigger than an angry boil. One morning they'd arrive at work with a band-aid on their nose and tell their secretary they'd had the boil lanced. When the band-aid came off, it would be goodbye, Clowntown.

But looking back on it, Bozo knew that he and his wife should have started a family. They put it off too long. Then all of a sudden Calliope wanted her own career. Bozo had argued strongly against it, but Calliope stood firm. "I can hear my slapstick clock ticking," she insisted. "It's now or never."

"Then it's never!" Bozo had shouted.

After the divorce, Calliope went to circus winter quarters in Florida. Bozo missed her. He tried not to think of her down there, just one more big red smile among a thousand big red smiles waiting for the big break. He got a card from her now and then. Sometimes he sent her money. But he knew he'd never see her again.

Bozo's food arrived. He ate it warily, unsure of his stomach, and set about organizing his thoughts on the case. So what did he have? The business of breathing out through the nose when you take a custard pie in the face was a clown trade-secret. So the murderer had to be a clown, a clown who knew Bunco well enough to know he still did the finger schtick.

And what about the hidden envelope? Bozo pulled it out and ex-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

amined the contents again. A receipt from Crystal Palace Furniture for a bedroom and a living-room set. Another from S-T Molding and Shelving for a fireplace mantel. A third from a company called PlexiGrandi for a piano. All were marked with the special instruction that the customer would pick them up at the warehouse. Why was stuff like this important enough for Bunco to hide? And was it connected with his murder?

Bozo pondered for a moment and then called the waitress over and showed her Bunco's union card. "Ever see this guy in here?"

She looked at the picture. "Him and his ball and chain? Sure—he was a regular," she said. "My first day here he gave me the honk and said if I played my cards right he'd introduce me to his bigwig pals in the circus. What a laugh. I sure told him where to get off."

"Somebody just told him where to get off permanently," said Bozo. "Bunco's been murdered." He waited for that to register before asking her, "Did he ever come in with anybody else?"

She snapped her gum thoughtfully before answering. "There was Waco. He was a rodeo clown—purple suspenders, hairy chaps, red-flannel long johns, a cowboy hat with the brim turned up in front—the whole ten yards. Distracting Brahman bulls from thrown riders was his life until rodeos went the way of the buffalo. He was a nice guy, Waco. Too nice to have anything to do with Bunco, I always thought. They used to sit over in that corner booth and talk. I haven't seen Waco for—how long's it been? Two months? Six weeks?"

She thought for a minute. "I let him take me out once. Oh, it was no big deal. He'd just come into some money and wanted to celebrate. He took me to one of those new wine bars where the mimes go. How harmless can it get, right, standing around for an hour or so pretending to drink?"

Bozo wasn't sure. In a recent try at cutting down on his own intake, he'd visited a wine bar some mimes had opened where Trapezio's, the great old Italian clown restaurant, used to be. It'd been a pleasant evening. A couple of those mime women would've been real knockouts if only they'd had big red noses. And the drinks had gone down smooth. But there'd been nothing pretend about the hangover he woke up with next day.

Over the past few years, mimes had started moving into center city Clowntown, renting apartments, restoring brownstones. Now they were a familiar sight every weekday morning, going off to their jobs wearing the tight jumpsuits of their class, striped jerseys, a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

white oval on the front of their faces, their hats decorated with a flower or a butterfly on a wire. And all of them, all, relentlessly walking against some wind that only they could feel. A lot of clowns resented the mimes, claiming they were standoffish and wouldn't give you the time of day. Bozo knew that wasn't true. Mimes were kind, gentle folk, quick, at the slightest encouragement, with the big smile and the gift of an imaginary flower.

"Boy, Waco really got a charge out of watching those mimes go through their paces—like sitting on bar stools that weren't there or leaning on empty air like it was the most natural thing in the world," said the waitress. " 'I've seen the future and it works,' he said as we walked out the door. Afterward we went around the corner to his place. He didn't try anything funny. We just had coffee and he showed me pictures of his kids."

"Where was this?" demanded Bozo.

"Corner of Pantaloon and Rigoletto," she said. "But don't waste your time. That was a couple of months ago. He said he was moving. He said the owner of his apartment building wanted to renovate and rent the place out for big bucks to the mimes. Hey, maybe he left his landlord a forwarding address."

She thought for a moment and said, "The only other guy I ever saw with Bunco was this big-jawed, big-chested clown in a red bowler and a tight orange suit."

Bozo drummed four fingers against his white cheek. "A tough-looking customer with a skull-and-crossbones on his left hand?" he asked. When she nodded, he had his clown. The only trouble was Mugo had been in jail for the last ten days on the charge of mime-bashing. But he had friends. Mugo could have arranged to have Bunco killed from there.

Mime-bashing was the crime of the moment among trendy clown criminals, a shameful business made all the more so by the victims' peaceful natures. Where clowns were incapable of harming another directly, mimes couldn't knowingly do harm to anyone, period. Except, of course, to themselves.

Unfortunately, a bad clown element had gotten wise to this. They would prowl the streets at night with their noses in their pockets so they couldn't later be identified in a police lineup. If they ran across a mime, they'd take a swing at him, being careful to miss by a good six inches. But mimes being what they were, they had to snap their heads around as though struck or hurl themselves backward into the nearest wall or down a flight of steps. Last month

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mugo and a bunch of his friends had set upon four mimes, throwing punches at them until the mimes knocked themselves unconscious. Then the clowns had stripped them and left them naked and bloody in the street. Fortunately, two of the victims had been able to identify Mugo by his tattoo. Could Mugo be the murderer? Why would he want to kill Bunco?

"Hey," said the waitress, looking down at Bozo's empty plate. "It's fresh—how about a slice of custard pie?"

Bozo headed off for Pantaloon and Rigoletto. But in the next block he saw a sporting-goods store and decided to get his nose tended to.

The dark, old-fashioned shop smelled of leather and the rosin bag. Bozo's honk was answered by one from the back room and a moment later a dusty old clown with a burly grey moustache appeared, cleaning his wire-framed glasses on his striped apron. He spotted Bozo's problem at once and without a word ushered the Inspector into a small curtained alcove.

There Bozo handed over the nose and sat with a hand modestly covering his naked undernose. The old man put a jeweler's loupe in his eye and examined the inside of the rubber nose. He sighed and was about to start his sales pitch when he saw Bozo's name inscribed on the rim of the hole. "Inspector," he asked in a voice filled with awe, "was your father by any chance Big Bozo?"

Bozo nodded. His father had been a three-star general in the Clown Marines. Strutting out there at the head of his crack clown drill-team in his uniform of electric-blue with all the gold frogging and gold stripes on the sleeve and his shako with its immense pompom, he'd been the hit of every parade. The drill-team's trips and stumbles were all coordinated to perfection. When one marching clown slipped on a banana peel, a hundred did.

"Let me shake your hand," said the little old clown, doing just that. "The way I see it, Big Bozo and his drill-team set war back a hundred years. And isn't that what the military's supposed to be all about?" Then he returned to the matter at hand. "Inspector, this nose of yours has gone to the well once too often. I can fix it for now, but what you really need—"

"Is a new nose? Forget it," said Bozo. "Not on a police inspector's salary."

"I was thinking of maybe something nice in the second-hand line," said the nose-auger man.

Bozo frowned. Since the india-rubber cartel, there'd been a sharp

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rise in the theft of noses for resale. There were even stories of ghoulish clowns haunting midnight cemeteries to desecrate the graves of the recent dead.

The old man had produced a small box lined with white velvet. Inside was a smart red nose. "This has you written all over it," he said. "A match made in heaven. That undernose of yours is a real honker. This little honey belonged to one of your small-nosed rodeo clowns. It'll auger out real nice."

Bozo blinked and snatched the nose. The name *Waco* was inscribed around the rim. "How'd you come by this?"

"Last week this rodeo clown in chaps and cowboy hat walked in off the street," explained the old man. "He said he had this spare that was just collecting dust. He said he could use the cash. So we struck a deal. Trust me. Like I said, it'll auger out real nice."

The old man was clearly disappointed when Bozo told him he'd have to get back to him on that. He shrugged and set about repairing the old nose as best he could.

Bozo sat there patiently, considering this new development. Here was this rodeo clown, a friend of Bunco's who comes into some money and then drops out of sight. A couple of months later, Waco pops up again out of nowhere to sell a spare nose. A week later more or less and Bunco gets killed. What the hell did it all mean? Bozo didn't know. But as he paid for the repair job, he decided to flash Bunco's picture. "Seen this guy around?"

The old man looked at him like he was joking. "The outfit's all wrong, of course," he said, "but I swear that there's the Waco character I was just telling you about."

Bozo strode down the street puzzling out this new development. Then he heard an approaching siren and stopped to watch as a Clowntown Fire Department ladder truck, a caricature of a vehicle, rushed down the street with clown firefighters falling off and chasing after it on all sides. Bozo smiled, knowing the bumble and ineptitude was part of the clown's art. That ladder truck would arrive at the fire as quickly if not quicker than any non-clown ladder truck. And, yes, the buckets of confetti they threw on the fire would extinguish it as effectively as any modern chemical mix. Clowns were proud of that.

As he resumed his walk, Bozo mused on why some clowns hated the mimes so much. He thought he knew the answer. It'd come to him a while back when he'd been eating his lunch on a park bench.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Along came this mime, walking against the wind, and sat down across the path from him as though there was a bench there, which there wasn't. From an imaginary brown bag, he drew this imaginary napkin and tucked it under his chin. Next came an imaginary sandwich, which he unwrapped and smiled down at before eating with visible relish, scattering the crumbs for the real pigeons.

Then he peeled and ate an invisible banana while he watched the birds crowd around his feet. When he was through, he put the sandwich wrapper and banana peel into the paper bag, which he crushed into an imaginary ball and tossed at a wire trash-container twenty feet away. The mime's anxious face told Bozo about the flight of the ball. He knew it rimmed the target once, twice, three times before body English knocked it into the container. Delighted, the mime got up and strode happily back in the direction he'd come, still walking against the wind.

Sitting chewing on his baloney sandwich, which now tasted like ashes, Bozo decided clowns resented mimes not because the pigeons preferred their imaginary bread crumbs to a clown's substantial ones or because a mime's invisible tears seemed larger, his silent laughter louder than clown sorrow or joy. No, in the end he decided that the mimes made the clowns feel clumsy, coarse, material, and utterly earthbound.

Not that that justified mime-bashing.

The brick facade of Waco's old apartment building had been sandblasted. A spanking new canopy flapped over the front door with *Pierrot Plaza* written across it in cursive script. While Bozo stood there at the curb, a mime couple arrived, pushing their child in an imaginary stroller. As more mimes entered and left the building, Bozo noticed the fat clown in top hat, cutaway, and baggy striped trousers standing nearby watching the come and go with a big red smile and rubbing his gloved hands together vigorously. The man was the epitome of the old plutocrat clown so popular in the Twenties and Thirties. Here was clown avarice—greed carried to the point of laughter. Here was the Pierrot Plaza's landlord.

Honking his horn and wagging his badge with a thumb behind his lapel, Bozo stepped forward. "Bozo's the name, Homicide's the game," he said. "I'm trying to track down an old tenant of yours, a rodeo clown called Waco."

The landlord clown turned pale. Glancing quickly left and right, he led Bozo by the elbow down the sidewalk to the next apartment

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

building. "If we're going to talk murder," he murmured, "let's do it here in front of my competitor's building. Violence makes mimes very nervous. But Waco didn't leave any forwarding address, if that's what you're after. I guess he's living somewhere in the high-rent district. Did you know he hit it big with the ponies a couple of months ago? He bet his bankroll. 'Play Animal Act in the fifth,' he told me. I wish I had. It paid a bundle."

Bozo frowned. Without a forwarding address, where did he go from here? "I don't suppose you caught the name of the people who moved his furniture?" he asked.

"That junk?" said the landlord. "He gave it all to the Poor Souls Rescue Mission. They fix up stuff like that for resale and use the money to help tramp and hobo clowns." He shook his head. "Boy, what a bunch of dodos they sent round to pick it up! Those clowns broke half the stuff on the way down, not counting what they did to the paint on the stairwell."

The landlord winced at the memory. Then he chuckled. "You want to hear something real funny? A month later when I'd fixed the place up for my new tenants, I was down in the lobby when this mime Pip, who I rented Waco's old apartment to, drives up in a truck with four mime buddies and they go through the rigmarole of unloading invisible furniture and carrying it up the stairs. Laugh, I thought I'd die. But here's what really got to me. Those mimes were a hell of a lot more careful moving furniture that only existed in their heads than those rescue-mission clowns were with the real McCoy.

"No, sir, I've got no complaints with the mimes," he continued, counting the reasons on his gloved fingers. "They're polite as hell. They're neat as pins. Maybe they're a bit emotional, but they don't talk your arm off. They don't trash the building. They pay their rent on time."

Warming to his subject, he added, "Look, I'm as big a clown booster as the next guy. But the circus doesn't stop here any more. We've got to move with the times. Sure, Waco was a nice guy and he got lucky—good for him. But he never did a lick of work, nothing but mope around in his apartment all day or hang out at the track. Now take the mimes. Five mornings a week there they go, all heading for the financial district, all walking against the wind. And after work, here they all come back, still walking against the wind."

Bozo knew the mimes were highly favored by the financial com-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

munity. The banks and brokerage houses liked them because of their honesty. As the saying goes, there are no pockets in mime jumpsuits.

The landlord barked a short laugh. "No, what I just said isn't quite right, come to think of it. They go and come back together, all except this Pip I was telling you about. He works down in the financial district like the rest of them, but with him you never know what way he's going to go when he leaves for work or which way he'll come back. Strange, right?"

"Well, maybe not," said Bozo thoughtfully. "Wasn't it the great clown philosopher Plato who said that the only thing you could say for sure about the wind was that it didn't always blow from the same direction?"

He left the puzzled landlord scratching his head, went into the apartment building, and took the elevator to the fifth floor where the directory said this Pip character lived. Suppose the guy wasn't a mime? Suppose he couldn't fake the walking-against-the-wind bit? Suppose he actually had to be walking against the wind? That would mean sometimes he'd have to head off in a different direction from the others. But if the guy wasn't a mime, who was he? Bozo thought he knew.

The door to Pip's apartment was wide open. The place was quite empty of furniture. A pug-nosed man in the usual mime getup sat in midair in the middle of the room, seemingly engrossed in the play of his wrists and fingers along the keys of a baby grand that wasn't there. Bozo's polite horn-honk made the mime jump and look up quizzically.

"I'm Inspector Bozo of the Clowntown Police, Mr. Pip," said Bozo. "I'm selling tickets for our annual Policeman's Ball."

Pip smiled broadly and nodded his head. Crossing the room, he seemed to sit down at an imaginary desk, pull out an imaginary drawer, take out an imaginary checkbook, and, with a visible flourish, make out an invisible check, which he handed over.

"You're very generous, Mr. Pip," said the police inspector. When the mime cocked his head modestly, Bozo continued, "You'll get your tickets in the mail, sir." Politeness made him add, "It's a nice place you've got here."

The mime beamed and, getting up, reached out his elbow and leaned with perfect ease on the precarious perch of a mantel Bozo could not see.

Back in the elevator, Bozo had to admit that Pip was one of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

best mimes he'd ever seen. Boy, that mantel routine, that was really some— Bozo frowned and tugged thoughtfully at the ends of his bright bow tie. Reaching in his pocket, he pulled out the manila envelope of sales receipts and went through them until he came to the word he was looking for. When the elevator doors opened, he crossed to the lobby phonebooth and skimmed through the classified ads, stopping to read in several places. Then he phoned for a police backup.

Rejoining the landlord out on the street, Bozo asked, "Did one of the mimes who helped Pip move in have a skull-and-crossbones tattoo on his hand?"

"Now that you mention it, one did. Strange. Mimes aren't much for tattoos. What's going on?"

"That's easy," said Bozo. "Those weren't mimes moving mock furniture. They were clowns in stolen mime outfits lugging real furniture up the stairs."

The landlord looked bewildered.

"Okay," said Bozo. "Do you know what the S-T in S-T Furniture Company stands for? See-Through, that's what. They make transparent home furnishings like fireplaces and mantels. And Crystal Palace Furniture only deals in glass tables and chairs and things like that. And surprise, surprise, PlexiGrandi Company makes Plexiglas pianos."

"So what're you telling me?"

"That your old tenant, Waco the clown, moved right back in again as Pip the mime. For him, clowning was a dead-end street. He dreamed of sending his kids to mime school to learn the basics—the tough stuff, like sitting on chairs and leaning on mantels that aren't really there. That meant passing himself off as a mime. Transparent furniture seemed the easiest way."

"So he wants his kids to have a better future than he did," said the landlord. "Since when was that a crime? Just between us, and in case you hadn't noticed, being a clown isn't what it used to be. So big deal. Listen, you don't tell anybody about Waco, I won't either."

"I wish it was that simple," said Bozo. "You see, Waco paid a shady clown named Bunco to set up his operation, like getting the fake mime union card, the furnishings, and the bogus mime movers. It looks like Waco gave this Bunco his clown nose as payment for all his help. And his costume, too. After all, he wasn't going to need the stuff any more. But Bunco had a little shakedown in mind. He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

calculated that Waco would end up in some mime job with a lot of money or insider-information lying around. Well, he was right. Where he made his mistake was thinking Waco would sit still for a lifetime of being blackmailed. Waco decided to have him killed with a custard pie."

As he spoke, a little fluorescent-yellow car with a big star on the door pulled up to the curb. Bozo's police backup had arrived. Fourteen uniformed officers got out and lined up in order of height, from a seven-foot beanpole to a dwarf no more than three feet tall. Back in the days before the cuts in the police budget, they could have gotten nineteen men out of the same car.

They were a smart-looking bunch of clowns, full of ginger and bicycle horns, eager to get the job done. Bozo divided them into two groups, one to take the stairs and his own assault group that would go up by elevator. At Bozo's signal, the policemen started tripping over themselves, bumping into each other, and trying to get through the apartment-building doorway at the same time. They were a crack unit. Even with a good dose of gaston-and-alphonsing on top of the obligatory clowning around, they were in position in record time.

The door to the false mime's apartment was closed. Signaling his men to keep clear, Bozo honked his bicycle horn at the keyhole and shouted, "Open up, Waco, it's the police! We're onto your game!"

From inside, a voice shouted, "There's nobody here named Waco! I'm Pip! I'm a—" Then, realizing he'd given himself away, Waco snarled a defiant, "Come and get me, coppers!"

Bozo heard the sound of a window opening. He signaled his men to break down the door, and followed in after them. Later he would remember the sorry dash of the Clowntown Police across a room filled with transparent furniture with a smile, but at the time the sight filled him with dismay. His men looked like a charge of stumblebums, barking their shins on the crystal coffee table and crashing into the Plexiglas piano and falling over the sofa and chairs.

Bozo rallied his men and, hot on Waco's trail, he led them out the window and up onto the roof. They got there just in time to see the fugitive clown cross over to the neighboring roof on a narrow plank. Sprinting as fast as his big shoes would allow, Bozo reached the edge just as Waco toppled the plank down between the two buildings. Bozo knew there'd be no catching him now.

Waco knew it, too. He lingered for a moment as Bozo's men came

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

running up. "Doing things on too big a scale was my only mistake!" he called. "Next time I'll make do with a glass cardtable and folding chair, max! I'll sleep on the floor! I'll send the kids to mime boarding school! I won't tell them the truth about their daddy until they're old enough to understand! Then it'll be our little secret!"

"You'll never pull it off!" shouted Bozo earnestly. "Every time you sat down, it'd be a lie! And what kind of life would it be for your kids, always afraid to invite their friends home, always having to hide the dark secret that their dad was a clown?"

"I'm not a clown! I never was a clown! I'm a mime!" Waco cried in a fury. Then, as if he realized his anger belied his words, he forced himself to be calm. "All my life I've felt like an outsider," he said. "I told myself it was because I was a rodeo clown in a world where the rodeos are few and far between. But deep down in my bones, I always knew I was a mime. I think maybe the Gypsies stole me from a mime cradle and sold me to a nice childless couple of rodeo clowns. Okay, I can't recapture my mime heritage for myself, but I can damn well do it for my kids."

"You lost any chance of that when you killed Bunco," said Bozo.

"Bunco deserved what he got!" shouted Waco, turning away from the edge of the roof and starting toward the top of the metal ladder that would take him down to a fire escape and safety. "He would have sucked me dry! Then he'd have started on my kids! I don't regret what I did!"

It was cold on the roof. The sun poked through the dull winter sky like a nose of brass. A mere summer ago the same sun had set, a perfect fit, soft, warm, and red, down the slot of any Clowntown street. Bozo sighed to himself. He knew what he had to do. "I've got to take you in, Waco!" he called.

The murderer continued walking toward the ladder.

Bozo's men were lined up along the edge of the roof. They turned to him for instructions, honking their horns nervously. Bozo had hoped it wouldn't come to this, but police regulations were clear—he knew what he had to do. He drew his weapon. "Stop or I'll shoot, Waco!" he ordered.

The fugitive clown had reached the roof parapet now, his hands on the metal uprights of the ladder. He gave Bozo and the other policemen standing with their drawn weapons a pitying look and shook his head.

Bozo had no other choice. As humiliating as it would be, he pulled the trigger and the flag popped out of the end of the barrel. BANG!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

said the flag. In the next moment, all the clown policemen fired and all the flags at the ends of their pistol barrels said BANG! One policeman had a submachine gun. Its longer flag read RATATAT! What other kinds of weapons would be issued to clowns who by nature were unable to hurt anyone directly?

Waco knew that and he should have made his escape, but when the barrel flags appeared his body gave a sudden jump and spun as though hit with a fusillade of bullets. The horrified clowns watched Waco's grip on the ladder give way finger by finger until he fell back into that long emptiness that led to the street below.

Bozo watched in sad amazement. Could Waco's parents really have been mimes? Or was his desire to be a mime so strong that when the flag fire came he'd done what any real mime would have done even if it cost him his life?

Bozo sat on the edge of his unmade bed massaging his big bare left foot, which rested on his knobby right knee. He'd been thinking about the day's events. But now he turned his thoughts to Calliope hanging around circus winter quarters with clown stars in her eyes. It seemed to him that she'd been right to go and try. And he'd been right to stay, to see in his own small way that clowns got a fair shake and gave a fair shake. After all, wasn't justice as rare as stardom?

And when push came to shove, the mimes were right, too. They'd pared things down to the essentials—a jumpsuit, a hat, imaginary flowers and butterflies. It looked like the kind of act the world needed now. Maybe the doom-sayers were right. Maybe the clown days *were* numbered. Maybe they'd played the game with too heavy a hand.

Well, what the hell, clown or mime, hadn't they all sprung from the same crazy pair of ancestors, sitting arm in arm, fishing for the moon in a bucket?

Bozo reached for the bottle of Old Roustabout on the bedside table, drew out the stopper with his teeth, and looked around for his well thumbprinted glass from the night before. When he couldn't find it, he grunted and spat out the stopper. Then he turned out the light, rolled over in bed, and fell quickly into clown slumber.

"Q"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LET THE DEVIL AND ELLERY QUEEN TAKE YOU

Along the tangled paths of vice and sin, 21 fascinating and horrifying stories.
11 Deadly Sins
Sin has its own rewards, but is it worth the price? You decide. Read 11 DEADLY SINS

Please send me the ELLERY QUEEN ANTHOLOGIES indicated.
Enclosed is my check or money order for $ _____.
Mail to: ELLERY QUEEN ANTHOLOGIES
P.O. Box 40
Vernon, NJ 07462

- ☐ #60 11 DEADLY SINS ($4.50)
- ☐ #59 MORE MEDIA FAVORITES ($4.50)
- ☐ #58 MEDIA FAVORITES ($4.50)
- ☐ #57 PRIME CRIMES 5 ($4.50)
- ☐ #56 BAD SCENES ($4.50)
- ☐ #55 PRIME CRIMES 4 ($4.50)
- ☐ #54 BLIGHTED DWELLINGS ($4.50)
- ☐ #53 PRIME CRIMES 3 ($4.50)
- ☐ #51 PRIME CRIMES 2 ($4.50)
- ☐ #50 MEMORABLE CHARACTERS ($4.50)
- ☐ #49 CRIMES AND PUNISHMENTS ($4.50)
- ☐ #47 LOST MEN ($3.95)
- ☐ #46 LOST LADIES ($3.95)
- ☐ #44 BOOK OF FIRST APPEARANCES ($3.95)

H7NC–6

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for delivery of your copy. Available only in the U.S.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Alison will never forget that weekend in Atlantic City, or at least she won't so long as Jimmy is around to see she doesn't . . .

A DARK CORNER

by J. W. WHITEHEAD

Jimmy starts in again about changing times in America.

Time was, he says, when a man could provide an honest living for his family.

To which Alison says, "So what's that got to do with you and me?"

"Don't you see?" Jimmy says. "You're my family. Hey, babe, who's been with you through the good and bad?"

"Through the good, I'm not so sure. Through the bad it's definitely been you, Jimmy-boy."

"Yeah, well, I've come this close two or three times, you know I have. I was this close to breaking the bank at least twice. But these days it's impossible for a man to even provide a *dishonest* living for his family."

"You and me, Jimmy, we're not a family. I'm not married to you yet."

"Not yet, right. And you never *will* be, right? I know, I know, I heard it the first eighty-five thousand times you said it. All I'm telling you is that as long as we're living like family—and here we are, babe, under one roof, ignoring our bills together—we've got to work together like a family. What I'm getting to is that you've got to do your share. You've got to pull your weight."

"Who are you trying to kid? I've had your sorry weight on my back since we first met."

Jimmy doesn't respond well to recitations of past history, which he considers just so much slightly rancid water under the bridge. He doesn't respond well at all. As a reminder of how little he appreciates recitations of past history, he pushes his half-full bottle of Pabst very deliberately to the edge of the table. She knows there's no sense to moving for it. Jimmy watches her until he's sure she won't make a move, then he pushes the bottle that last little bit so it goes over the edge.

© 1989 by J. W. Whitehead.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Oops," he says.

The beer foams out over the jagged brown edges of glass, then settles to a cloudy amber, like dog's water. "Okay, okay," she says, "I take it back."

"Apology accepted," says Jimmy. "I guess you must be forgetting that time we had in A.C."

She will never forget that weekend in Atlantic City, or at least she won't so long as Jimmy is around to see she doesn't.

It was a very vulnerable time for her. She had just come to the point where she knew the rest of her life would be spent counting the days until Friday. It made her tired to think about it, and she had found herself for the first time in her life—sensible, down-to-earth Alison—taking in movies three or four nights a week, luxuriating in the romantic claptrap, longing for a life she felt certain now she'd never have.

She met Jimmy a couple of months later, while she was working at Pat's Steaks on South Street. Her job was to stand beside Cool Nate, a big black man who fried mound after mound of chip steak without so much as the blink of an eye, and shovel steak and accoutrements-to-order into foot-long Kaiser rolls as customers filed past.

One night while she was slinging Cheez Whiz and mushrooms onto a tangle of browned steak, she looked up and chanced to see Jimmy staring her down. He was with somebody else at the time, a tall girl with way too much makeup on her face. When their eyes met, Jimmy smiled at Alison. She looked to see if the other girl had noticed, but she was staring at herself in the mirror behind the grill. Jimmy didn't even look at Alison again that night, but he was in by himself the next night, late, and they had a cup of coffee together after Pat's closed.

She knew she had to take it slow, but she also knew she had to begin seeing him. It was just a few months after that first night at Pat's that they went to A.C.

Jimmy had gotten stone-lucky at the track, on a longshot named—she'll never forget the name of the horse—Thanks for the Memories. He won very big—crooked big, money coming out of every pocket. As she saw more and more of the money that weekend, she got more and more scared that Jimmy was into something neither of them could handle. And yet the things they could do with money like that!

Fresh from the track, Jimmy had swung by her workplace (which

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at that point was a Taco Bell, the hours being better for a girl with a boy friend) and, above her protestations and well founded fears for her job, popped her into a rent-a-car from Avis, a big, faceless brown coupe that still had a cardboard Avis mat on the floor on the passenger side, and sailed her onto 95 and across the Walt Whitman and down the A.C. Expressway with WPEN blasting the Chairman of the Board in AM stereo for two hours straight.

You never had it so good, she said to herself. This man, this Jimmy Carlinski driving at seventy-five miles an hour in a new-smelling rented car, he knows exactly what you need.

It was kind of frightening, actually. That whole weekend had been a revelation to her of how good and how frightening life with Jimmy could be. They went to Harrah's, "the other Atlantic City," and they ate and drank the best of everything. Jimmy dropped a grand at the blackjack tables and didn't even blink. When she pressed him for how he'd gotten so much green, he gave her a look like she was spoiling their perfect weekend.

"My ship came in, babe," he said. "Leave it at that."

Alison knows now how he got that money, and any money that's come his way since other than the measly hours he picks up at the post office when they're shorthanded and desperate enough to call him. He gets the money for favors, running errands, that sort of thing.

She gets down on her knees and starts mopping up the puddles of beer and shattered glass with thick wads of paper toweling. He strokes her head fondly, the way he would a dog.

"So what do you want me to do?" she asks.

"I need a favor," he says.

"Have a seat," says Stoneman. "Let me get a look at you. Your father worked very hard for me for many, many years. I took it as a great personal loss when he passed on."

Alison waits while he takes a look.

"Do you know," he says, "I can walk through any acre of forest you care to name and tell you within a hundred dollars how much timber you can cut from it?"

She already knows about Stoneman's eye. Jimmy made it sound like everybody must know about the skill of his eye.

Stoneman is as plump as the cushions in his regal sitting room, the plump cushions on the divan and the loveseat and the smoking chairs. She sits in the smoking chair that faces his own. The two

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

chairs are positioned in one corner of the room, near the arching, lead-bound window which is swathed in veils of plush curtain. The cushions on Stoneman's chair are slightly worn from years of use.

The smoking chair gives her a bright idea and she asks if she may smoke. Stoneman disallows the request. He doesn't smoke, he says, except for the occasional victory cigar. With a wink he tells her it's against his religion. "To make money like I make money, you could give up a bad habit, too," he assures her.

Too long in the chair and she knows her back will be hurting. It is not made to lend support. Anyone who can afford to sit in a chair like this doesn't need support. Dynastic backbones rest themselves in chairs like these.

Her father used to say that Stoneman knew timber the way most men wish they knew women—he knew how to cultivate it, how to dress it up, how to show it off. Stoneman knew how to make timber happy. As a rich man, he has come to be a source of other kinds of wealth. He is very wise, but not out of books.

When Alison was little, her father used to talk about Stoneman like he was President of the United States, though he wasn't president of anything but lumber and shipping companies. She met Stoneman once before, when she was twelve, at a company dinner honoring her father, among others, for many years of devoted service to Stoneman Enterprises. Stoneman was fat then and gave off a funny, perfumy smell. He's still fat and he hasn't changed his cologne.

"No honest man ever learned about timber or women through books," Stoneman says. She is inclined to agree. In his presence, she is fairly impelled to agree. When he smiles at her, it's as if he has thrown rivers of cash at her feet. Surely there's no one who cannot appreciate such a sensation.

"One time I bought a company with no money down."

Stoneman waits. He will talk when he's good and ready. Hairs wisp around his bare skull the way they would if he were under water.

"A major competitor of mine—" Stoneman launches himself into the tides of the story "—was selling out, lock, stock, and barrel. Worthit Lumber Company. Now, you know there was no one in the world I was going to allow to purchase that company but me. They were selling the yards, the acreage, and assorted other real estate. Naturally, the company's accounts were included, too. I won't tell

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you what they wanted for all of it. The trouble was that at that moment I found myself somewhat cash-poor.

"What I did," Stoneman says, "is I rolled the dice."

He sits back again and rests a fat unringed hand on the little bulge of belly at his fly.

She can't accept this, this thing about rolling the dice. After all, he's a man who knows what timber wants, who can make timber happy, who can give timber the desires of its ringed heart. What's this reference to chance?

Of course, she realizes then. Of course. It's a great man's nod to humility. It's a wink at the notion of an unorderable universe. It's a joke. She wonders if he meant her to understand this. She recognizes that she's afraid and wishes she had her old life back—going to the movies, watching other people in love and in tight shaves.

Stoneman says, "I went to some of my creditors and told them I needed money to play with for a day or two. They gave me the hairy eyeball and I gave them a better hairy eyeball right back and they handed over the cash. I raised $150,000 in three and a half hours. I put that $150,000 up front as a downpayment and requested the title be transferred within twenty-four hours. When it was, the first thing I did was go down to the bank and check out the status of my new accounts. I suppose you know what I found there."

She has an idea, but knows it's not her place. Stoneman inflates like a balloon.

"There was $157,000 in the accounts. I withdrew all but seven thousand, paid off my debts, and had myself a new industry for no money down. By the way, the name of those dice I rolled is Providence."

That's the end of the story, Stoneman seems to say as he pushes back into the maternal fleshiness of his chair. He reclines like a sated bull.

"Would you care to part with some of that providence?" she asks. The words come out very small, not a little beggarly. They embarrass her, and her smile can't salvage her much comfort. She believes she might just hate Jimmy Carlinski.

"Would that I could," says Stoneman. "But it isn't mine to give." There are tiny blue veins in his nose. It looks like the map of some exotic continent. When he smiles, his teeth are cold and white, like ivory. In the right market, they would bring a pretty sum.

"You know," he says, "you're really a very lovely girl." He is in the process of loosening his pants. His lazy eyes never leave her.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The knuckles of his fat fingers mash against one another, impede each other's movements.

"What are you doing?" she asks, though she knows what he is doing. It's why she's here.

"You help," he says, ignoring her question.

She helps.

When they finally subside, he says, "This isn't an accident. There is always a plan." He hides his teeth away behind a frown. The hairy eyeball scours her clean. "What is it you want?"

She thinks there's a tremendous possibility she will die without a cigarette in the ten minutes it takes to get out the door after Stoneman knows what she wants. He leaves the room as soon as she tells him she needs money. She wonders if he's going to get the money, or get a gun, or call the police. All the possibilities seem equal. She can hear him opening and shutting doors, striding through the house swiftly for all his weight. She rearranges her clothes and combs through her hair with fingers that smell of stale cigarettes and whatever. She would kill for a smoke.

In her haste to leave, she forgets her handbag, but Stoneman sees it on the floor as he comes after her to see her out. "Here's your bag, hon," he says. He can't remember her name.

She takes it, but at first he won't let go of the strap. He stares at her with that knowing eye that can size up a forest, holding his breath, and she wishes there was something more for him to look at. He himself looks like a different man—thinner, meaner.

"You're on the level, aren't you?" he says. "This is really why you're here, isn't it? For money?"

"Yes," she says. "Yes."

"You know," says Stoneman, "your parents were lovely people—" He stops. There is nothing down that path. "This guy who sent you here," he starts again. "This guy sounds like trouble. You don't need that."

She nods and shoulders the bag.

"Just out of curiosity, what's his name? —I've always said you can tell a lot about a man by his name."

"Jimmy Carlinski," she says.

Stoneman rolls that one around for a while. "A Pole," he finally says.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"On his father's side." She is imagining a cigarette between the index and middle fingers of her right hand.

"How did you get here?" Stoneman asks abruptly.

"How did I get here?" she repeats.

"Yes, how did you get here? Did you walk? Did you take the bus? Did someone drive you?"

"I don't understand why—"

"Hey, are you on the level or not?" he demands. *"How did you get here?"*

"He drove me."

"Who did?"

"Jimmy—Jimmy did," she says. She wishes she'd never met Jimmy Carlinski. She wishes Jimmy Carlinski was dead.

Stoneman goes and looks between two slats of the venetian blinds in one of the front windows. "Is he picking you up?"

"No."

"That doesn't seem right," he says.

"That's Jimmy for you."

Stoneman watches her and sees there aren't any lights on. "What I'm telling you is that you don't need this. What I'm telling you is, the way you came to me today, I can't respect you. You can't come here like this and expect anything different than what you got from me. What I'm telling you is, I don't ever expect to see you again. Understand?"

She nods, because that's the easiest way out at this point.

"Now you have to go," he says. "I'm expecting Mrs. Stoneman any moment."

He swings the door wide and glances up and down the wide street. If he sees anything she doesn't see, he doesn't let on. "It was nice of you to drop by," he says.

A block away, she stops to see if anyone has seen her and to light a cigarette.

Jimmy isn't home when she lets herself in. Her stockings need a washing. The musky white streaks have dried gold on the tan material.

She takes them off, brings them to the sink, and starts scrubbing. Cigarette ash flits down into the soapy water and drowns. If she can get the stockings done before Jimmy gets home, she'll tell Jimmy that Stoneman didn't remember her, or her father or mother. In thinking back, Stoneman could have been lying about that, anyway,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

just out of common courtesy. She herself hardly remembers her mother or father any more. Stoneman probably knew from the beginning what she wanted and the terms of barter she would be willing to offer.

It all makes her want to cry.

But she knows Jimmy can't afford to believe she might not have come through. There's a question of courage, and its lack. He'll say, "You know they're going to cut off my —— hands if you didn't get anything! Where am I going to get money now?"

"Jimmy, I'm sorry," she'll say, "he didn't remember them. He didn't remember anything."

And all the time she's thinking, You don't need this. Just say it. Say to him, when he starts yelling, "I don't need this." Just tell him. Say, "Let them cut off your —— hands. I don't need this."

Jimmy makes it home around two. He seems bathed in beer and meanness. He's ugly in the light, skinny everywhere except for his big belly. Losing hangs heavily on him, like sweaty clothes. He has a camera bag with him she's never seen before and he stuffs it in the closet. He squints in the light and shuts off the switch. She climbs all over him because he likes that when he's been drinking. She forces him to take her. All the time the thought runs through her head, You don't need this.

"What's this all about?" he says. She hushes him.

"I know what this is," he says a little later. "You liked that today, didn't you? Hey, babe, you were damn good in there today."

"What are you talking about?" she breathes.

Jimmy stops talking, stops everything. He looks at her and his eyes go distant. "I can tell things went good from the way we are now."

"That shows how much you know," she says. "He wouldn't give me anything."

"Right," he acknowledges. "But at least you're trying to pull your weight now."

"You're not mad?" She's puzzled.

"Hey, how can I be mad? As long as you didn't tell him my name, everything's cool."

He finishes, scuttles away like a crab, cleans himself, gets dressed. She watches him closely as he comes in and out of the shadows of the room like a ghost passing through walls. She isn't sure why, but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

she knows that when she told Stoneman Jimmy's name she turned a dark corner in her life.

"Where are you going now?" she asks.

"Don't worry about it," he tells her. "It's not your problem."

She almost says, "But I want it to be my problem." Then she thinks, No, you don't.

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS

All subscription orders and mail regarding subscriptions, including change of address, should be sent to Ellery Queen, P.O. Box 7052, Red Oak, Iowa 51591.

For change of address, please advise 6 to 8 weeks before moving. Send your current mailing label with new address.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a ***NEW*** **Magistrate Ti Jen-chieh story by**

ALLAN LLOYD

"As far as I knew," the forester told Magistrate Ti, "old T'an was the kind of man who never put himself in front of any hard work or danger he could step aside for. He would never join in on any fight, wouldn't even bivouac with the other men or be part of their gangs. All he wanted was to be alone to himself or with the women whose company he seemed to prefer over anything else. But do you know, at the same time old T'an could be one of the gentlest and most helpful people I've ever known. As long as there was nothing fearful in it, he'd do anything under heaven for you, sacrifice his very honor for you. Here in the garrison, that is. In his home he was a very different man entirely."

This is our second Magistrate Ti story from Allan Lloyd. The first was "The Man Who Wiped Away Footprints," in the September 1988 issue. Mr. Lloyd has just completed his first novel about Ti Jen-chieh, the real detective on whom Robert van Gulik based his fictional Judge Dee . . .

UNDER A PLUM TREE

by ALLAN LLOYD

Sometime during the Lung-shuo reign of the T'ang Dynasty, in the riverbank city of Shou in the province of Huai-nan, most of the trees within the town's walls were jealously claimed by the commander of the military garrison, a man who was more interested in possessing than preserving. He entrusted the daily care of the garrison's straggling park to a forester named Luan Chou. This man was old and compact, innocent as spring, the kind of open-air laborer who could never be imagined to be either too hot or too cold.

© *1989 by Allan Lloyd.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He had grown up and grown old with the trees. Nominally a soldier, as his father had been before him, the forester enjoyed the commander's special care and never had to present himself for fighting, or even maneuvers, as long as the trees continued to thrive beautifully enough to be shown to important visitors and friends. Luan was well contented with his work, not only because it let him live among the harmless green shadows of the woods, but also because he was able to share something priceless with many of those who passed through or loitered among the paths and sanctuaries of the numberless trees. Military garrisons always impart a stale flavor to the towns they protect. Manners become ruder, common gestures seem overdone, stalls that should be selling books or toys offer drinking cups and daggers, and taverns and brothels discolor even the simplest and most innocent of streets. The forester had never loved the military life, anyway, and here in Shou he felt that the center of his duties lay in somehow pacifying and harmonizing the city and its people.

He had a great faith in the civilizing powers of wilderness. He had seen the same time and again, how some brute soldier with an enemy's blood still fresh upon his leather armor would turn by chance through a stand of trees and be suddenly brought up short by a branch or a bright flower. The forester had seen broad shoulders softened by fragile blossoms, and more than once he had heard sobs stifled behind hard shields of horn. It was this chance to restore to people some degree of nature's balance that made his work so worthwhile, and Luan Chou took much pride in the irony of renewal that he labored to maintain in the midst of so much savagery.

Himself unlucky with women and childless, he lived alone in a private hut surrounded by cooling willows. One of the many favors the commander showed him was to let him lie separate from offices and barracks, in the quiet heart of the garrison's park. What the forester alone knew was that the growth of trees that contained his home was also the chosen meeting point for any lovers who hungered for a refuge where they could be alone for a time, where their whispers could be lost in the general rustling of leaves.

He never actually spied upon anyone—he was far too basic and honest a man for that—yet he observed many of their rendezvous in the same guileless way that he watched and charted the progress of certain saplings that were only remotely under his control. It pleased him deeply to see how minor were the differences between the tentative groping of branches and the awkward ramifications

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of love. Many thought him a lonely man, but he would have disagreed. The truth was that the forester, like any good gardener, was as happy living the lives of those he nurtured as he would have been experiencing their joys himself.

This summer especially, a season of rains and idleness, soldiers from the barracks brought their women here to take advantage of the forester's vegetation. For two or three months now, he had been noticing one couple that favored the shaded base of an aged plum tree growing at the edge of his grove of willows. They appeared and disappeared together, at the same time every day, just when the garrison's men were let out to eat or rest.

Luan Chou recognized them both. The woman, a housewife named Huan Wen-chi, was a small, dark woman who should have been spending her days helping her husband supply river fish to the army. The forester had never heard any dark words spoken about her, if one excepted the rumors of her anger and her changeable emotions. Her companion was an older soldier known by almost everyone in the city of Shou. T'an Ssu-ming was probably the steadiest and most revered man in the garrison. He had been a tailor by profession, before the empire had called him into the military, and even now he continued to work informally, altering and mending the company's uniforms. He was well loved by the entire regiment. Being a widower with a grown, unmarriageable daughter on his hands, he was normally excused from many duties and forgiven excesses that might have cost any other soldier a layer of skin. The garrison as a whole knew of T'an's romances, yet everyone seemed to agree that he was harming no one.

The forester may have felt a mild bewilderment at seeing the tailor squandering his time with such frivolous games of dalliance, but he knew it was not his place to interfere. Even spying upon the couple inadvertently was shameful, though Luan Chou had lately been finding it impossible not to notice. The tailor and the woman had chosen a fairly exposed spot, and during the last few weeks their refuge had been changing from a sultry quiet to an acrid tension. The forester had been able to follow, even against his own will, the decline of the couple's affair to a regular bickering that crackled the shrubbery. This week the two had turned more bitter than usual, the whine of the woman's petulance carrying through leaves and bushes, and the forester began to wonder if eventually he might not have to speak to the tailor himself to restore some peace to his garden . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It was during one summer morning of wind and pending rain that the forester's work took him by degrees toward the tall plum tree where the tailor and his mistress were used to hiding. Luan Chou walked as any good gardener walks, with his head lowered and his look serious, his mind tormented by fears of blight and insects. He was nearing the plum tree before he knew it, approaching it noiselessly on the side where a screen of untended bushes stood. These were some of the many growths he left to themselves, hoping to remind everyone of the wilds even here in the confines of the garrison.

The artifice must have worked, for as he came within earshot of the bushes he began to hear a sharp scratching that he guessed was a sign of some small forest animal. He stopped in a moving shadow of cloud and took shallow breaths, waiting to see. When nothing emerged, his second thought was of the two lovers, and he suddenly felt red with embarrassment. The bushes rasped once more and were still. The forester was just about to creep backward as lightly as he could when a play of uncertain sun slanted behind the shrubs and illuminated the silhouette of a supine body. Naughtily, he looked closer—and saw that there was indeed only one and that it was T'an Ssu-ming.

At any other time, Luan Chou would have retreated at once and gone dutifully about his business. But a threat of fungus had made him suspicious today, and the body under the plum tree seemed too unmoving. If the tailor was sleeping, it would be a kindness to rouse him and send him back to his barracks before he was missed by the commander.

Scuffling his feet as naturally as he could, the forester edged his way through the bushes and found the man at his feet. Luan had seen enough of autumns and winters to know death at first sight. T'an Ssu-ming was stretched out on his back, his leggings and tunic neat and his soldier's cap set squarely on his head. His right cheek was disfigured by a wipe of dirt, but the rest of his face looked rested and at peace. Even his hands lay turned calmly downward at the waist, almost as though the man had eased himself back into his last sleep. There were no visible injuries and no blood, but the forester did not have to move any closer to know. Standing alert in the beginning morning, he was suddenly aware that his entire living park was in ceaseless motion—everything, that is, except the chest of the romantic tailor.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The woman, Huan Wen-chi, was nowhere to be seen, so the forester left the body hidden by the line of bushes and hurried to the commander's offices. There, he found he had to struggle to win the attention of even the lowliest subordinate.

"Under the plum tree in the park," he said, unaccountably ashamed of himself. "A tragedy that must be reported."

The only official who could be bothered to return with him was a youngster the forester had never liked, one of the eager, polished boys who like scum on a pool always rise to the top. Luan led him wordlessly to the plum tree, oddly excited about showing off his garden's newest acquisition. Neither of them spoke, the first sound being the forester's groan when he swept back a shrub and revealed that the body was no longer there.

The young man nodded wisely, calculating his own possible profit. "The commander will surely hear of this at once," he said gravely, "and I fear he will not be pleased." He spun around and stalked importantly off, leaving the forester gasping for air.

"But he was lying just here, just a moment ago!"

Only after the other man had disappeared did Luan Chou see the faint imprint of the body on the damp grass. He knelt to touch the ground. The shaded earth still felt vaguely warm. Where the right hand had lain remained a slight groove in the soil, as if the fingers had dug in there and failed to hold. The forester straightened up after a moment and sighed. The commander of the garrison liked him, he was sure of that, yet it could not hurt to hurry back to the offices and present his own limp explanation, if only to balance the black report the young man was probably repeating even now.

Luan's humiliation was not as bad as he had feared, though he did have to suffer patiently the humor of men half his age with none of his abilities. By the time he was allowed to escape, the day had advanced past noon, he was hungry, and there was still a full day's work waiting for him in the park.

He walked back as fast as he could, feeling the awakening sultriness of the afternoon at the base of his neck and in the swollen heaviness of his thoughts. He had already decided to spend the rest of the day in a stand of bamboo that needed cleaning, a corner of the woods that lay a good distance from the plum tree. There was no good reason to return again to that line of bushes, to that impression in the grass. Yet, wholly against his determination, the forester somehow managed to steer himself directly back, as if there were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

still some way of resolving the mystery in a simple way. He yearned for a common explanation, yet he was familiar enough with nature's green magic to feel a stir of panic in the center of his chest. Spirits, he knew, were everywhere, and the woods had always been a favorite place for the robbing of souls and the changing of forms.

He approached the plum tree with all the caution of an illegal intruder, and when he finally parted the bushes he could feel that his voice was equally ready either to sigh or to scream.

The body was back, of course, lying precisely as it had lain before, fitting exactly into the imprint that could still be detected in the grass. The forester, after his first shock, stood motionless and began comparing what he was seeing with what he remembered. There had been no change, absolutely none—only the smear of dirt was gone from the face and the cap was an untidy mess on top of the head.

Still feeling his recent shame, Luan Chou overcame his disgust and bent down to lay his palm on the old tailor's chest. There was no movement, no heartbeat, and when the forester gently lifted the head from the ground to roll the body over, his hand came away red and hot with blood. He straightened up and looked around at the park that was still maddeningly empty and thought about what he had to do now. He was a lenient man and had very little selfishness in his makeup, but suddenly he found himself fretting at the probability that he would have to spend his whole day trying to get anybody to believe him again.

The man the commander sent to the forester's hut to talk with him was a grave man in his early thirties, poised just at that age between the energy of youth and the confidence of maturity. He did not wear any official robes but dressed simply and with dignity. According to the commander's messenger, Ti Jen-chieh was a working magistrate from a distant part of the empire who was staying for a short time with the local magistrate of Shou, an old friend from the same school. Magistrate Ti had no actual standing in the city and certainly none in the garrison, yet all knew he was rumored to have noteworthy abilities in solving human riddles and in supplying answers.

Some ten days had passed since the forester had found the tailor clubbed to death under the plum tree, and the commander's voice was betraying angry impatience at the disgrace to his garrison. The tailor's mistress, the fishwife Huan Wen-chi, had been questioned

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for hours at a stretch, but as it happened the day of the death had been one of the rare times when she had chosen to work with her husband as she was supposed to do. With her guilt reduced to the merely conjugal, the town was left with the nagging sense of something unconcluded, of a life and a death that failed to fit together. And now here came a pure stranger into the forester's home to peer into all the dustiest corners and uncover every rotting secret he could find.

As he always did, Luan Chou welcomed his guest into his hut by giving him a modest tour of the single, crowded room. The forester worked among trees and he slept surrounded by what men had made of trees. He collected nothing, but everything he owned was so close in origin to what he was that nothing seemed out of place. The figures of door-gods and the unstrung bow were of polished peach wood, the truest wood for clearing the house of demons. Every candle had been fashioned from the tallow tree, and the idle lute that was missing all of its seven strings could have been made of nothing but genuine t'ung wood. A catalpa chessboard shone like a star upon the table, and a screen and a stack of cushions scented the room with suggestions of the paper mulberry and the dusty prickling of ch'ing grass. These and more the forester was eager to display to his surprise guest, no matter how much of an outsider the man must be. Yet Magistrate Ti seemed to have little time for anything but whatever private ideas he had brought here with him. He even ignored entirely what had obsessed the garrison commander for days—the fact that Luan Chou had seen the old tailor die not once, but twice.

The young magistrate stood like a rooted tree in the middle of the room. "I was wondering," he asked the forester quietly, "if you could tell me anything about the late Mr. T'an Ssu-ming?"

Motioning his guest to a cushion, Luan Chou seated himself second and studied the dirt floor for inspiration. This man was a foreigner to the garrison, but the forester could hardly afford to offend the commander any further.

"Are you familiar with the expression 'to have peach-blossom luck'? It is used of any man who enjoys particularly good fortune with the ladies. Such was never my luck, of course," he added wistfully, "but old T'an was surely blessed in that way, if ever mortal man was. Even at his age and weak as he was, he just seemed to be passing whenever a woman turned her head, almost as if neither of them had thought it or could help it in the least. Roots to water, that's how he affected them. It was the strangest thing you ever

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

saw, him being on in his years and with his girl there at home waiting up for him and himself having about as much true strength in him as a baby willow.

"The wonder of it all was that no one ever saw him encouraging any of the women to come to him. He did nothing, even went out of his way at times to ignore them, and they tore at each other's eyes to get at him." The forester wagged his head in awe, then he dipped his voice into the dark of a corner.

"There were a few of us asked ourselves if he was really one of us—you know, if maybe he liked his mates more than he liked their wives. But even a rumor like that wasn't enough to stop the girls from wanting to follow him. Old T'an was a crane, a crane in a soldier's clothes, that put all the rest of us mere chickens to shame."

"What did he do, then," the magistrate asked after a moment's consideration, "with the women? Where did he take them, I mean?"

"Well, there's another oddity, sir." The forester laughed softly as the summer afternoon cushioned the room with its thickest shadows. "Most of the men in the garrison, when they have some time and money to spend with a lady, will walk her down the hill to one of the houses or inns that are run there for that purpose. But not T'an—not even once!—and there were enough of us wanting to know that we couldn't have missed it. No, he always entertained them just as he did the last one, the fishwife, with a polite stroll about the privacy of the park. It seemed almost as if he was afraid to spend some time alone with any one of them."

"Did the women never fight among themselves for him?"

"No, he was subtle that way. Smart. He kept each pretty much blind to any of the others. No small feat in a town this small."

The magistrate looked around the room as though he expected to see all that he was hearing etched out in lively scenes upon the walls. "And their husbands?" he asked somewhat drily. "Their men? Never any problems from that quarter?"

"Some had none. Widowed, left. The rest must have been either too simple or too ashamed to know. I know how I would feel in their place," the forester concluded dimly, recalling all the knotholes in the history of his own luckless passions.

The two men sat for a time without speaking, each sunken within himself. Outside in the park, the willows swept the moving air and transferred into the hut the dark physical odor of the plum.

"The tailor never thought of marrying again?" asked Ti.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Not after losing his first at the birth of the girl. It changed him, they tell me. He felt resentful, abandoned, deserted."

"You know his daughter, then?"

The forester's voice emerged hollow. "Oh, I've seen her the odd time and again, though she's hardly ever far from their house. She doesn't care much for the company of the crowd, I suspect. A shy thing. Still a child, really."

"How old is she?"

"Ah, well, let me count. Yes, I'd say Mu-lan must be close to twenty-seven these days. One year less, one year more, perhaps."

The forester had spoken in the kind of tightened whisper used by aunts when they talk of their nieces who have long ago passed their last chance to marry. Yet the visiting magistrate did not seem to notice. He was concentrating everything, including his breathing, on something else.

"Mu-lan, you said her name is?"

Luan Chou said he was sure that was it, though it had been some time now since he had seen her. "And most of us here in the garrison," he added, "don't gossip much about the poor thing. Which is different, too, seeing as it's talking secrets that keeps most of us awake during the day."

"A tailor with a sense of history," Ti mused. Then, seeing the forester's puzzlement, he explained: "Hers is a famous name from the past, you see. I wondered that the tailor would have had the mind to think of it."

"Oh, but that was the mother's doing, with her final breath. I don't know the history, but it is said she gave the daughter the name so that the father would have someone to protect him, watch over him."

"And did he need so much caring for, the tailor? Before the morning of his death, I mean."

The forester inhaled uneasily, suddenly unwilling to give away too much. But the seated figure of the young magistrate, the unmoving moral weight of his quiet insistence, was finally impossible to resist.

"Old T'an," Luan Chou began, "was always the weakest soldier in the garrison, the frailest. He had a gallbladder as tiny as a rat's and no real courage or manliness to speak of. I never knew him that well, you understand, though he was in the service a full twelve or thirteen years. I don't think I spoke to him more than two or three times a year in all that time. But I saw him enough, and I heard

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tell of him more, and as far as I knew he was the kind of man who never put himself in front of any hard work or danger he could step aside for. He would never join in on any fight, wouldn't even bivouac with the other men or be part of their gangs. All he wanted was to be left alone to himself or with the women whose company he seemed to prefer over anything else."

The forester stopped and struggled to understand something. "But do you know," he went on, "at the same time old T'an could be one of the gentlest and most helpful people I've ever known. As long as there was nothing fearful in it, he'd do anything under heaven for you, sacrifice his very honor for you. Here in the garrison, that is. In his home he was a different man entirely."

"You were there?" Magistrate Ti asked, newly interested.

"Oh, only a time or two in all these years. He lived in the southern part of the city in a pair of rooms where he worked the tailoring trade when the army let him. He was another man, I thought, when he was with his daughter. He was rough and demanding and impatient, never ready to do for himself what she could do for him. The times I was there with them, I thought he was going to run the breath of life right out of her, the way he had her serving him and slaving for him. That's a daughter's first duty, of course, but old T'an seemed to carry it a bit far."

"Yet she never failed him, I suppose?"

"No, sir. Mu-lan was the most loving of daughters, a glowing example to all the rest of the young hereabouts. I think she would have died herself just to see her father eat his rice in perfect contentment to the close of his days."

The magistrate stood up abruptly and looked intently down at his host.

Luan Chou could hear his excited breathing. "Could you direct me to the house?" he asked. "I suppose the girl is keeping herself indoors since her father's murder."

"Nothing like it. I've seen her walking my park every day since, prowling about much as her father used to do, only she's alone. If you're likely to find her anywhere, you'll probably see her sitting under that same plum tree, waiting for her father to show himself again."

The young magistrate moved toward the door, and the sunlight he let in felt colder and thinner than it should have. The forester had more to say, but the other man seemed already to be seeing the girl underneath the tree.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"If luck is with me," Ti said mostly to himself as he left, "the girl and I will not have to wait for her father too long."

For the next few days, the forester was a separated and helpless witness to the drama—or the game—that was being played out in his beloved park. Later, the commander of the garrison would object that Luan Chou had had no right to spy on the young outside magistrate, and that because of this overreaching he, the forester, must lose some of the official privileges he had enjoyed for so long. Luan Chou decided this was fair, though hard, but he never regretted the time he spent watching the peculiar relationship that developed between the magistrate and the dead tailor's daughter. It was his park, after all, and not seeing the mystery out to its end would be the same as asking him not to look for the grown tree that had sprung from the shoot he himself had planted and trimmed.

Magistrate Ti did not find the girl under the plum tree as soon as he left the hut, but she did come there later, taking advantage of the cool isolation of the evening. The forester followed the magistrate as carefully and nonchalantly as he could, convincing even himself that there was plenty of work that needed doing in that direction. He was eventually forced to take up a position behind a thicket some distance from the plum tree, and until the end of everything he could see well enough, but he could not hear a word. He would later have to trust to what the magistrate would tell him concerning all that was said, though by then the forester would have guessed some of it, anyway. He was a very good watcher, having been taught by a lifetime of looking for promises in clouds and reading the ideographs brushed upon the air by the sweeping of a branch.

Magistrate Ti and the girl met and talked together under the plum tree on four occasions, and later the forester would be reminded that the words for four and for death were pronounced almost identically. From where he stood watching, he could see no great changes between the first meeting and the last. The girl was each time found sitting on a fallen trunk that lay beneath the tree and behind the screen of shrubbery, not far from where her father's blood still darkened the grass. She was always dressed in the same simple robe, with a tiny hat pinned into her hair that was fashionable in this riverside city only twenty years before.

The hat was barely visible to the forester, especially in the darkling evenings when the meetings took place, but Mu-Lan was con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stantly fussing it into place with her hands, and the movements of her arms made her seem like some wild bird trapped in a corner of the park. She was girlishly small, but the taut outline of her robe showed a stronger frame than most men her size could boast. Luan Chou remembered her as being pretty, but only as a younger sister is pretty, and once a stray sunbeam highlighted her cheek and the peach-blossom ringworm that scarred so many young women in these lowland areas. She never appeared surprised to see the magistrate come to join her on the fallen trunk, and to the last their conversations seemed to be polite and inconsequential. The observing forester, at any rate, after seeing the two finish the first empty exchanges demanded by custom, was unable to detect much of a development in their meetings. Throughout, the visiting magistrate seemed properly stern and superior and the girl remained feminine and servile.

Only twice in four days did Luan Chou notice any signs of a buried tension. Once, when the magistrate seemed suddenly about to strike her face for no reason, lifting his hand toward her ruined cheek, the girl defended herself wildly and wiped his arm aside. And the second time, as Ti pointed to her hat and the shading plum tree above them, Mu-lan automatically raised her hands to set the hat right in her hair, then stopped halfway. But these were nothing more than conspicuous gestures that stood out in a vigil that quickly became pointless and dull. It was not until the fourth and last evening had almost blackened into night that he began to realize what it was about the repeated scene that stirred him, vaguely but deeply. He had witnessed the same somewhere before.

It had been, he knew at last, in the house of the old tailor himself during Luan Chou's few visits there. The father and daughter had acted out such a queer little drama together that the forester had been reminded that he had never seen them do the same outside the house, that indeed he had never seen them out at the same time doing anything together. He had sat in awe of the closet ritual that the two had followed naturally, without thinking. As he took all the girl's time for his own, the father had been as hard and demanding as the garrison commander could sometimes be. On her part, the daughter had gladly emptied herself for him and had held nothing back, not even her last chances for happiness. And yet, as the forester had sensed then and thought he understood now, it had been Mu-lan herself who had kept total control—who, hidden behind the polite bow and girlish whimper, had somehow been masterfully di-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

recting all things exactly as she wanted. Her father had merely acted the part of the king in chains.

Remembering this, watching it happen again, Luan Chou almost pitied the young magistrate and his strengthless confidence. Even from a distance, the forester was sure who was winning. And it must have been this certainty that left him so disturbed when, following the last evening interview, the girl Mu-lan walked calmly off to fill the sleeves of her robe with heavy sand and throw herself into the dark waters of the river Huai.

"Do you have questions, my friend?"

The forester could not answer at once, hearing how greatly the magistrate's voice and manner had changed. The girl's suicide seemed to have resolved everything for him, and now he had become as relaxed and open as a younger brother with a shared childhood. Luan Chou had found him the morning after the drowning returned a final time to the space beneath the plum tree, seated in a triangle of silver light that seemed to cleanse him of all the tragedy of the day before. Luan Chou had sat down beside him and bent his head in an exhausting confusion.

"I have many, I'm afraid," he said. "I think I have hardly understood anything about this entire trouble."

Patiently and with kindness, the younger man explained, speaking as if he were retelling a grave story from a history that was older than time.

"I'm surprised, sir, that you are not familiar with the old tale of the girl's namesake, one Hua Mu-lan. It goes back some one hundred and fifty years, to the Yung-p'ing reign, I think. The girl was still living with her father, who was weak and sickly, when the military called him to come and serve. In those times, who could refuse? So the daughter, forsaking all else for the sake of her father, disguised herself as him and went in his place.

"She served undetected," the magistrate said solemnly, "for fully twelve years. Do you see now that when you first told me the name of the tailor's daughter I thought of nothing but the near parallel? I understood more, of course, in the few days that followed as I talked to some of the other soldiers in the garrison, men who gossip nearly as much as ancient washerwomen. They notice things, and they confirmed much for me: how the supposed T'an Ssu-ming never bathed naked with his mates in the river; how the daughter, as herself, refused to pass the time with any soldier; how neighbors

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

would try in vain to visit the girl at home when they thought the father had gone to the garrison and left her there alone.

"Twelve years is a very long time, and there were flaws in the masquerade, yet the girl performed well. And the evenings I spent here talking with her, sparring with her, finally convinced me that she sacrificed her womanhood not only out of an almost monstrous devotion to her father but also from a rebellious unhappiness with her tedious place at home. After a time, I think she truly liked the life of a soldier and the security it gave her of being someone other than who she was. Perhaps it also pleased her to become the father she felt she had disappointed by not having been born a male."

Struggling to take this in, Luan Chou said, "I am beginning to see how she must have tricked us into seeing her as him. But why kill him after all these years if she was so happy with the way things stood?"

For the first time, the young magistrate faltered, turning his face away from the forester's eyes. He seemed flustered and uncomfortable, as if he were mystified by a strange queasiness deep within him.

"Well, the girl never told me everything, you understand. But as I saw it, she finally found in the fishwife, Huan Wen-chi, the kind of love she had been searching for most of her life. Yet it was a form of love which the older woman could never comprehend or accept and which gave rise to the sour quarreling between them. Last week Mu-lan must have despaired of ever being able to love anyone entirely as herself, she must have imagined that it was only her father who was to blame for her long misery."

"And his death freed her, too," Luan Chou observed, "though who can say for what?" For a moment, he sorrowed over the human obscurities from which his trees were so luckily escaped. "So now you have told me," he went on, "why the girl must have killed her father. But you haven't said why she needed to do it twice—nor how you yourself came to know."

"The first was mostly your fault, Mr. Luan," Ti said. "You came here too early that morning, just as she was making ready to lay his body out. You must have come striding through these thickets and almost tripped across the corpse, so she had to divert you by impersonating her father one last time. She hid the ringworm scar with a smear of dirt in place of the yellow skin paint she usually used and trusted to your surprise to keep you at a distance. You returned with a witness too quickly for her to finish everything, but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by the time you came back alone again the father had taken the place that had been waiting for him for years. At long last, the father could become an honored ancestor, and the poor daughter could become a woman."

"I knew nothing," Luan Chou murmured, depressed. "For so very long, I knew nothing."

Magistrate Ti rose to his feet, a young man feeling triumphant and just a bit immodest. He looked at the forester, then up at the proud plum tree that had recently seen so much passion and anguish. The leaves were weightless in the light and whispering among themselves, and for the first time in days there seemed to be the color of renewal in the air.

"No, you knew more than you knew," Ti said. "It was you and you alone who told me that the body had changed its greatest detail between its two appearances before you here. It was I who was so terribly slow at grasping the truth. I saw it only after sitting here with the girl for days, after watching her fuss constantly with it."

"With what?" the forester wailed, totally lost. "With the truth?"

The young magistrate looked thoughtfully up at the tree. "A woman, you know, is always neat and precise in her dress, even when she must quickly mimic a dead parent. A man wears his clothes as they happen to hang from him—or as they are put carelessly on him. Have you forgotten, my friend, the expression we use when we mean to advise someone to avoid suspicious circumstances? 'Under a plum tree, do not adjust your hat?'

"Only think of it!" Ti laughed a bit emptily, turning his back on the great tree. "I might have understood nothing at all if Heaven had chosen to plant a willow here instead."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a not-to-be-missed reprint by

SIMON BRETT

Billy Gorse took anything he was offered—driving, bouncing, frightening, looming. Often booked for looming, he was, on account of his size . . .

DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT ART

by SIMON BRETT

I have been described as not very bright. Partly, I reckon, it's my size. People who look like me have appeared as dumb villains in too many movies and television series. And if you've had a background as a professional wrestler, you find the general public doesn't have too many expectations of you as an intellect.

Also, I have to face it, there have been one or two unfortunate incidents in my past. Jobs that didn't turn out exactly like they was planned. Like when I was in the getaway car outside that bank and I drove off with the wrong passengers. Or when I got muddled after that bullion robbery and delivered it all back to the security firm. Or when I wrote my home address on that ransom demand. Okay, silly mistakes, sort of thing anyone could do in the heat of the moment, but I'm afraid it's the kind of thing that sticks in people's minds and I have got a bit of a reputation in the business as a dumbo.

Result of it all is, most of the jobs I get tend to be—to put it mildly—intellectually undemanding. In fact, the approach of most of the geysers who hire me seems to be, "We couldn't find a blunt instrument, so you'll have to do."

Excerpted from Tickled To Death by Simon Brett. Copyright © 1985 by Simon Brett. Reprinted by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons, an imprint of Macmillian Publishing Co.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now, of course, my own view of my mental capacity doesn't exactly coincide with that, but a chap has to live and a recession isn't the time you can afford to be choosy. I mean, you read all this about rising crime figures, but you mustn't get the impression from that that villains are doing well. No, we feel the pinch like anyone else. For a start, there's a lot more blokes trying to muscle in. Side-effect of unemployment, of course, and most of them are really amateurs, but they do queer the pitch for us professionals. They undercut our rates and bring into the business a kind of dishonesty I'm sure wasn't there when I started. The cake isn't that much bigger than it ever was and there's a hell of a lot more blokes trying to get slices.

Result is, I take anything I'm offered—driving, bouncing, frightening, looming (often booked for looming, I am, on account of my size). No, I'll do anything. Short of contract killing. Goes against my principles, that and mugging old ladies. As I say, it's no time to be choosy. When this country's got more than three million unemployed, you just got to put off your long-term ambitions, forget temporarily about career structure, and be grateful you got a job of any sort.

So when I was offered the Harbinger Hall job, it never crossed my mind to turn it down. Apart from anything else, it sounded easy and the pay was bloody good. Five grand for a bit of petty larceny—well, that can't be bad, can it? Sure, there was always the risk of getting nicked, but didn't look like there'd be any rough stuff. Mind you, never be quite sure in stately homes. Tend to be lots of spears and shotguns and that stuck on the walls, so there's always the danger that someone might have a fit of temperament and cop hold of one of those.

Still, five grand for a weekend's work in a slow autumn was good money.

The initial contact come through Wally Clinton, which I must say surprised me. It was Wally I was driving to Heathrow after that jeweler's job the time I run out of petrol, so I didn't think I was exactly his Flavour of the Month. Still, shows how you can misjudge people. Here he was letting bygones be bygones and even putting a nice bit of work my way. Take back all that I said about him at the Black Dog last New Year's Eve.

Anyway, so Wally gets in touch, asks if I'm in the market, and when I says yes tells me to go and meet this bloke "Mr. Loxton" in this sauna club off St. Martin's Lane.

Strange sauna club it was. Not a girl in sight. I think it actually

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

must've been for geysers who wanted to have saunas. All neat and tidy, no little massage cubicles with plastic curtains, no funny smell, no nasty bits of screwed-up tissue on the floor. Most peculiar.

Bloke on the door was expecting me. Give me a big white towel and showed me into a changing room that was all very swish with pine and clean tiles. He told me to take my clothes off, put on the towel, and go into the sauna, Mr. Loxton would join me shortly.

Don't mind telling you, I felt a bit of a grapefruit sitting on this wooden shelf with nothing on but this towel. When I first went in, I sat on the top shelf, but blimey it was hot. Soon realized it got cooler the lower you went, so I went to the bottom one. Still uncomfortably hot, mind. Geyser my size really sweats when he sweats.

I tried to work out why Mr. Loxton had chosen this place for the meet. I mean, a sauna's good if you're worried the opposition might've got shooters. Isn't anywhere you can put one when you've got your clothes off. Nowhere comfortable, anyway. But this wasn't that kind of encounter.

On the other hand, it wasn't bad if you didn't want to be identified. The lights in the sauna was low and it was a bit steamy. Also, people don't look the same when they're starkers. Oh, I know they do lots of corpse identification from secret birthmarks and moles on the body and that, but the average bloke without clothes on looks very different. For a start, next time you see him, chances are he'll be dressed, and you'd be surprised how many clues you get to what a person's like from what they wear. I reckoned Mr. Loxton was meeting there to maintain the old incog.

I felt even more sure of that when he come in. He had a big towel round him under his armpits like me, but he also got a small one draped over his head like a boxer. He didn't turn his face toward me but immediately went over to a wooden bucket in the corner, picked out a ladleful of water, and poured it over this pile of stones. Well, that really got the steam going, and when he did turn toward me he wasn't no more than a blur.

"You're Billy Gorse."

I admitted it. Wasn't spoken like a question, anyway—more a statement.

"Thank you for coming. Wally Clinton recommended you for a job that needs doing."

He might have hid his face with all the towels and the steam, but he had a voice that was really distinctive. Private school, you know,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and a bit prissy. I'm good with voices. Knew I'd recognize his if I ever heard it again.

I stayed stumm, waiting for the details, and he went on. "What I want you to do, Gorse, is to steal a painting."

"Blimey," I said, "I don't know much about art."

"You don't need to."

"But surely—paintings. I mean specialist work, isn't it? Not like walking in and nicking someone's video. If a painting's any good, it's got security systems all around it. And then finding a fence who'll handle them sort of goods—"

"All that side is taken care of. All I said I wanted you to do was to steal a painting."

"You mean I'd be, like, part of a gang?"

"There's no need for you to know anything about anyone else involved. All you have to do is to follow instructions without question."

"I can do that."

"Good. Wally said you could. You do the job on the last weekend of October."

"Where?"

"Have you heard of Harbinger Hall?"

I shook my head.

"Then I suppose you haven't heard of the Harbinger Madonna, either."

"Who's she?"

" 'She' is the painting you're going to steal."

"Oh. Well, like I said, I don't know much about art."

"No." His voice sounded sort of pleased about that.

He asked me where he could send my instructions. I nearly give him my home address, but something told me hold my horses, so I give him the name of Red Rita's gaff. She often holds mail for me on account of services rendered what I needn't go into here.

Then Mr. Loxton reached into his towel and pulled out a polythene bag. Thought of everything, he did. Didn't want the notes to get damp.

"Five hundred in there. Two thousand when you get your instructions. Second half on completion of the job." He rose through the steam. "Stay here another ten minutes. If you appear in the changing room before I've left the building, the contract's canceled." He reached for the door handle.

"Oh, Mr. Loxton—"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

His reaction was that half second slow, which confirmed that he wasn't using his real name. No great surprise. Very few of the geysers I deal with do. Not for me, that. Always stick to "Billy Gorse." Only time I tried anything different, I forgot who I was halfway through the job.

"What did you want, Mr. Gorse?"

I'd got what I wanted, but I said, "Oh, just to say thank you for the job, Mr. Loxton."

He done a sort of snort and walked out the sauna.

Long ten minutes it was in that heat. When I come out, I was sweating like a Greek cheese.

Instructions come the following week as per. I went down Red Rita's for reasons that aren't any of your business, and after a bit she give me this thick brown envelope. Just my name on it—no stamps, nothing like that. Just come through her letter box. She didn't see who dropped it.

I didn't open it till I got back to my place next morning. First I counted the money. Fifties, forty of them all present and correct. Then there was this postcard of some bird in blue with this nipper on her knee. That was presumably the picture I was going to nick. I didn't take much notice of it, but unfolded the typewritten sheet of instructions.

No mention of my name and they wasn't signed, either. Plain paper, no other clues to where it might've come from. It was all typed in capital letters, which I must say got my goat a bit. Reckon Wally Clinton'd been casting aspersions on my literacy, the cheeky devil. Anyway, what I had to do was spelled out very clear.

FIRST—FILL IN THE ENCLOSED BOOKING FORM, BOOKING YOURSELF INTO THE STATELY HOME WEEKEND AT HARBINGER HALL FOR 29 AND 30 OCTOBER. SEND THE FULL PAYMENT BY MONEY ORDER. (ALL YOUR EXPENSES WILL BE REPAID.)

SECOND—THIS FRIDAY, 21 OCTOBER, TRAVEL DOWN TO HARBINGER HALL AND TAKE THE CONDUCTED TOUR OF THE BUILDING (THESE RUN EVERY HOUR ON THE HOUR BETWEEN 10 A.M. AND 4 P.M.). WHEN YOU REACH THE GREAT HALL, LOOK CAREFULLY AT THE PAINTING OF THE MADONNA, NOTING THE VISIBLE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS AROUND IT.

WHEN THE TOUR REACHES THE END OF THE LONG GALLERY UPSTAIRS, LINGER BEHIND THE GROUP. AS THE REST OF THEM GO INTO THE BLUE BEDROOM, OPEN THE DOOR LABELED "PRI-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VATE" AT THE END OF THE GALLERY. YOU WILL FIND YOURSELF AT THE TOP OF A SMALL STAIRCASE. GO DOWN THIS QUICKLY AND YOU WILL FIND YOURSELF IN A SMALL LOBBY. ON THE WALL OPPOSITE THE FOOT OF THE STAIRS YOU WILL SEE THE BOXES CONTROLLING THE BUILDING'S ALARM SYSTEM. THESE ARE OPERATED BY A KEY, BUT YOU WILL SEE THE WIRES WHICH COME OUT OF THE TOP OF THE BOXES. WHEN YOU ACTUALLY COME TO STEAL THE MADONNA, YOU WILL CUT THROUGH THESE WIRES. HAVING SEEN THEIR POSITION, RETURN AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE UP THE STAIRS AND REJOIN YOUR GROUP. COMPLETE THE REST OF THE TOUR AND RETURN HOME WITHOUT FURTHER INVESTIGATION.

FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS WILL FOLLOW NEXT WEEK. MEMORIZE THE DETAILS IN THESE SHEETS AND THEN BURN THEM.

I done like I was told and before the Friday I got a confirmation of my booking on this "Stately Home Weekend." I read the brochure on that and I must say it didn't really sound my scene. Tours of the grounds, lectures on the history of the place, full medieval banquet on the Saturday night, farewell tea with Lord Harbinger on the Sunday. I mean, my idea of a fun weekend is going down Southend with a few mates and putting back a few beers. Still, I'd put up with a lot for five grand.

So the Friday I do as I'm told. Get the train out to Limmerton, and from there they've got this courtesy bus takes you out to Harbinger Hall.

Not a bad little gaff old Lord Harbinger's got, I'll say that for him. Don't know any more about architecture than I do about art, but I can tell it's old. Don't build places like that nowadays, not with blooming great pillars in front of the door and all them windows and twiddly bits on the roof.

Nice position and all. It's high, like on top of this hill, looking out over all the rest of the countryside. That's how you first see it in the bus from the station. As you get nearer, you lose sight for a bit, because it's a really steep hill with trees, so you sort of zigzag up this drive, which is really a bit hairy and makes you glad the old bus's got decent brakes. And then suddenly you come out the top and you're right in front of the house, and it's blooming big. And there's car parks off to the right and left, but the bus drops you pretty well by the front door.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I looked around as I got out. You know, some of these stately homes've got sort of zoos and fun fairs and that, you know, a bit of entertainment. And since I had to spend a whole weekend there, I thought it'd be nice to know there'd be something interesting to do. But no such luck. Place hadn't been developed like that. Maybe the grounds wasn't big enough.

In fact, not only hadn't the place been developed, it looked a bit tatty. I mean, that sort of place isn't my style. Blimey, if I owned it, I'd knock it down and put up a nice executive Regency-style townhouse with double garage and Italian-suite bathroom. But even I could tell this one needed a few grand spending on it.

And if my busload was anything to go by, the few grand wasn't going to come very quickly from tourists. Okay, end of the season and that, but there wasn't many of us.

Had to wait around till a few more come from the car parks before they'd start our guided tour, and then it was only about a dozen of us. Well, at a couple of sovs a head, takes you a long time to make money that way.

The guide that took us round had done the trip a few thousand times and obviously hadn't enjoyed it much even the first time. The spiel come out like a recording, jokes and all. Didn't look a happy man.

And what he said was dead boring. I never got on with history at school, couldn't see the percentage in it, so all his cobblers about what Duke built which bit and when didn't do a lot for me. And to think that I'd got a whole weekend of lectures on it coming up. I began to think I was going to earn my five grand.

Anyway, eventually we get to the Great Hall and I see this picture all the fuss is about. Didn't go for it much on the postcard and the real thing's just the same, only bigger. Not big, though, compared to some of the numbers they got on the walls. I don't know, two foot by eighteen inches maybe? Don't know why they wanted to nick this one. Some of them was ten times the size, must've been worth a lot more. Still, not my decision. And a good thing, come to think of it, that they didn't want me to walk out with one of the twenty-foot numbers under my arm.

So the picture's just this Mum and her sprog. Frame was nice, mind. All gold and wiggly, like my brother-in-law's got round the cocktail bar in his lounge.

And at the bottom of the frame there's this little brass plate nailed on. It says:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MADONNA AND CHILD
Giacomo Palladino
Florentine
(1473–1539)

Never heard of the git myself.

Anyway, I'd memorized my instructions like a good boy, so I have a good butcher's at the pic. Can't see a lot in the way of security. I mean, there's a sort of purple rope strung between uprights to keep the punters six feet away from the wall, but that isn't going to stop anyone. Of course, there might be some photo-electric beam or some rocker device what sounds the alarm if you actually touch the thing. I step over the rope to take a closer look.

"Art lover, are we, sir?" asks this sarcastic voice behind me.

I turn round and see this bloke in uniform. Not the guide—he's up the other end blathering about some king or other. No, this geyser's just some sort of security guard I noticed hanging around when we arrived. "No," I says, with what people have described as my winning smile, "don't know a blind thing about art."

"Then why are you studying the Madonna so closely?"

I'm about to say that I'm just interested in what security arrangements she got, and then I twig that this might not be so clever, so I do this big shrug and step back over the rope and join up with the other punters. I glance back as we're leaving the hall and this guard's giving me a really beady look.

Upstairs I follow the instructions without sweat. Dawdle doing the old untied-shoelace routine while the rest troop in to hear the history of the Blue Bedroom, quick look round to see I'm on my own in the gallery, then through the old Private door and down the stairs.

It's just like they said it would be. These big metal-covered boxes opposite me with colored lights and chrome keyholes on them. And at the top the wires. Not that thick. Quick snip with the old metal-cutters, no prob.

I think for a minute. I know some of these systems got a sort of fail-safe so's they sound off if anyone tampers with the wiring. For a moment I wonder if someone's trying to set me up. Certainly are one or two geysers what I have sort of inadvertently offended in the course of my varied career, but this'd be a bloody elaborate way of getting their own back. Anyway, there's the two and a half grand I already got. Nobody's going to spend that kind of bread just to fix me. I hurry back upstairs again.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I've just closed the door when I see the security guard coming in the other end of the Long Gallery. Don't know whether he saw me or not, but he still looks beady. "Looking for something, sir?" he calls out, sarcastic again.

"Little boys' room," I say, and nip along to the Blue Bedroom.

Next package arrives the Wednesday, three days before I'm due on my Stately Home Weekend. I'm actually round at Red Rita's when we hear it pop through the letterbox, but needless to say by the time I open the front door to see who brought it, there's nobody in sight.

Since the whole thing's getting a bit close and Red Rita's tied up with someone else, I open the package there. There's money in it, which I wasn't expecting this time. It's in fives and ones and a bit of change and covers my expenses so far. What I paid to book the weekend, return fare London to Limmerton, even the two quid for my guided tour. Someone's done their research. Makes me feel good. Nice to know you're dealing with geysers who knows what's what. There's a lot of berks in this business.

As well as the money, there's a car key. Just one, on a little ring attached to a plain yellow-plastic tag. And of course there's the instructions. Block capitals again, which miffs me a bit. Again, they're so clear an idiot could understand them. I wonder if someone's trying to tell me something.

ON THE MORNING OF SATURDAY 29 OCTOBER AT 9 A.M., GO TO THE UNDERGROUND CAR PARK IN CAVENDISH SQUARE. THERE, IN BAY NUMBER 86, YOU WILL FIND A RED PEUGEOT WHICH YOU CAN OPEN AND START WITH THE ENCLOSED KEY. ON THE BACK SEAT WILL BE A LARGE SUITCASE TO WHICH YOU WILL TRANSFER YOUR CLOTHES, ETC., FOR THE WEEKEND. *DO NOT REMOVE ANYTHING FROM THE SUITCASE.*

IN THE GLOVE COMPARTMENT OF THE CAR YOU WILL FIND MONEY TO PAY THE PARKING CHARGE. DRIVE DIRECTLY TO HARBINGER HALL. GIVEN NORMAL TRAFFIC CONDITIONS YOU SHOULD ARRIVE THERE AT ABOUT HALF PAST TWELVE, JUST IN TIME FOR THE BUFFET LUNCH WHICH OPENS THE STATELY HOME WEEKEND.

DURING THE WEEKEND TAKE PART IN ALL THE ACTIVITIES OFFERED AND GENERALLY BEHAVE AS NATURALLY AS POSSIBLE. ABOVE ALL DO NOT DRAW ATTENTION TO YOURSELF.

THE MOMENT FOR THE THEFT OF THE MADONNA WILL COME

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LATE ON THE SUNDAY AFTERNOON WHEN THE TOUR GUESTS ARE ABOUT TO LEAVE. AT THE END OF THESE OCCASIONS THE TRADITION HAS DEVELOPED OF LORD HARBINGER, HIS FAMILY, AND STAFF LINING UP IN THE FRONT HALL TO SAY GOODBYE TO THEIR GUESTS. THE PREMISES WILL BE CLEARED OF DAY VISITORS BY FOUR O'CLOCK ON THIS, THE LAST DAY OF THE SEASON. THERE WILL BE NO STAFF GUARDING THE MADONNA.

FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS EXACTLY. AFTER TEA WITH LORD HARBINGER, THE STATELY HOME WEEKEND GUESTS ARE GIVEN HALF AN HOUR TO PACK AND ASKED TO APPEAR IN THE FRONT HALL AT SIX TO SAY THEIR GOODBYES AND GET THE COACH TO THE STATION OR GO TO THEIR OWN CARS. DO ANY PACKING YOU HAVE TO AND GO DOWN TO THE FRONT HALL AT TEN TO SIX, *LEAVING YOUR SUITCASE IN YOUR BEDROOM*. WHEN MOST OF THE OTHER GUESTS ARE DOWNSTAIRS, MAKE A SHOW OF REMEMBERING YOUR SUITCASE AND HURRY BACK TO YOUR BEDROOM TO GET IT. *THE NEXT BIT HAS TO BE DONE QUICKLY*. GO FROM THE PRIVATE APARTMENTS TO THE LONG GALLERY AND DOWN THE STAIRCASE TO THE ALARM BOXES, CUT THROUGH THE WIRES AT THE TOP OF THE BOXES. THERE IS A DOOR TO THE RIGHT OF THESE WHICH LEADS DIRECTLY INTO THE GREAT HALL. GO THROUGH, GO STRAIGHT TO THE MADONNA, AND REPLACE THE ORIGINAL PAINTING WITH THE COPY IN YOUR SUITCASE. IT WILL JUST BE A MATTER OF UNHOOKING THE PICTURE AT THE BACK. WITH THE ALARMS NEUTRALIZED THERE ARE NO OTHER RESTRAINING DEVICES.

PUT THE ORIGINAL PAINTING IN YOUR SUITCASE AND RETURN UPSTAIRS THE WAY YOU CAME. GO BACK TO YOUR ROOM AND THEN GO DOWN THE MAIN STAIRCASE TO THE FRONT HALL. THE WHOLE OPERATION SHOULD TAKE YOU LESS THAN FIVE MINUTES AND WILL NOT BE NOTICED IN THE CONFUSION OF THE GUESTS' GOODBYES. JOIN IN WITH THESE AND BEHAVE PERFECTLY NATURALLY. ALLOW ONE OF THE STAFF TO TAKE YOUR SUITCASE OUT TO YOUR CAR AND ASK HIM TO PUT IT ON THE BACK SEAT.

DRIVE STRAIGHT BACK TO LONDON. RETURN THE CAR TO THE CAVENDISH SQUARE GARAGE, PARKING IT IN BAY 86 OR AS NEAR TO THAT AS YOU CAN GET. REMOVE YOUR OWN BELONGINGS FROM THE SUITCASE BUT LEAVE THE CASE ITSELF AND THE PAINTING, ALONG WITH THE CAR KEY AND PARKING TICKET, INSIDE. THEN LOCK THE CAR BY PRESSING DOWN THE LOCKING

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BUTTON INSIDE AND CLOSING THE DOOR WITH THE HANDLE HELD OUT.

WHEN YOU RETURN TO THE ADDRESS USED BEFORE, YOU WILL FIND THE SECOND TWO AND A HALF THOUSAND POUNDS WAITING FOR YOU.

AS BEFORE, MEMORIZE THESE INSTRUCTIONS *AND BURN THEM.*

Now I got my principles, but crime is my business and it's a sort of natural reaction for me to have a look at any plan what comes up and see if there's anything in it for me. You know, anything extra over and above the basic fee.

And, having read my instructions, I couldn't help noticing that, assuming all went well with the actual nicking, from the moment I left Harbinger Hall on the Sunday night I was going to be in temporary possession of an extremely valuable painting.

Now I been in my line of work long enough to know that nasty things can happen to villains carrying off the goods. You hear cases of them being hijacked by other gangs, mugged, somehow getting lost on the way to their handover, all that. And though I didn't fancy any of those happening to me, I wasn't so down on the idea of them *appearing* to happen to me. I mean, if I'm found on the roadside with my motor bashed in, a bump on my head, and the suitcase gone, the bosses won't be able to prove I knew the bloke who done it.

Don't get me wrong. I wasn't planning anything particular, just sort of going through the possibilities in my mind. Like I said, I don't know anything about art, but I do know that you need extremely specialized help if you're trying to unload a well known stolen painting.

One of the advantages of Red Rita's line of work is that she does get to meet a big variety of people, and when I mentioned, casual-like, that I wanted a bit of background on the art scene, it turned out she did just happen to know this geyser who was a dealer in the less public transactions of international art collectors. And he was another of the many who owed her a favor and, yes, she'd be quite happy to fix up a meet. For me, darling, anything.

I suppose I shouldn't have been surprised, if I'd thought about it. I mean, bent bookies are still bookies, bent solicitors do their stuff in solicitors' offices, but I really hadn't expected a bent art dealer to work out of a posh little gallery off Bond Street. Still, that was the address Red Rita give me, and when I got there it seemed that Mr. Depaldo was expecting me.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The sniffy tart at the desk said she would just check he was free and left me looking at a series of pics of what seemed to be a nasty accident in the kitchen of a Chinese restaurant. I don't know how people buy that stuff. I mean, if you can't tell what it's meant to be, how do you know you're not being taken for a ride? Don't get me wrong, I'm not against all art. My brother-in-law's got this collection of sunsets painted on black velvet and with those, you can *see* they're good. But a lot of this modern stuff—forget it.

So I'm shown up to Mr. Depaldo's poncy little office, and he's a real smoothie. Striped shirt, bow tie, you know the number. If I didn't know about his connection with Red Rita, I'd have put him down as a wooftah.

But her hold is clearly strong. Plain from the start he don't want to see me, but Rita's threatened to blow the lid on something if he won't, so he just about managed to be polite.

I ask him if it's possible to sell a stolen picture and he says, through a lot of unnecessary grammar, that it is.

Then I mention the Harbinger Madonna, and he sort of perks up like a con man spotting a mark. And I ask him how much he reckons it's worth.

"Well, it's hard to tell. Prices at auction are so unpredictable. I mean, there aren't many Palladinos around—certainly no others of that quality. The last one to come on the market was a Saint Sebastian back in sixty-eight. Went to eight hundred."

Didn't seem that much to me. I mean, paying me five grand and only getting eight hundred for the goods, that's no way to run a whelk-stall.

Old Depaldo must've twigged what I was thinking, because he says, rather vinegary, "Eight hundred *thousand*, of course. But that was fifteen years ago. And an inferior work. If the Madonna came to auction now, she must go to at least two."

"Two?" I queried, not wanting to be caught out again.

"Million."

"That's at auction?"

"Yes. A—private deal wouldn't realize nearly as much."

"Like what?"

You know, all fences give you the same pause before they come up with a figure. Doesn't matter if you're talking a color telly, a lorryload of booze, or a *Last Supper,* they all hesitate before they cheat you. "Maybe one. Say seven hundred and fifty to be safe."

Even if he'd been telling the truth, it sounded like a lot of money.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Made my five grand for actually taking the risk and doing the job look a bit pathetic.

"And if it did—become available, you could handle it?"

He nodded, looking sort of eager. Obviously he knew there was a lot more in it for him than he let on. "There are only two people in London who could make the arrangements, and I'm one of them."

"But I'm the first one who's talked to you about it?"

"Yes."

So perhaps my bosses had got a deal set up with the other geyser. "What's your commission rate, by the way?"

"Sixty percent," he says, cool as an ice-cream down the neck. "You see, in these matters the risk must be judged in relation to how much one has to lose."

Meaning he'd got his poncy gallery and his sniffy tart downstairs and his international reputation, and I was just a cheap heavy. I let it pass. Reckoned I could work out some fine tuning on the figures later if it became necessary.

"Any idea," he asks, really keen now, "when this exceptional property might come on the market?"

"No," I tell him. "Only asking for information, aren't I?"

He looks a bit miffed.

"But if it ever was to come up," I go on, "you'd be interested in—handling it?"

"Oh, yes," he says.

I haven't made any plans yet, mind. But it is nice to have things sorted out in case you need them.

Saturday morning I do like a good boy should. Get to Cavendish Square car park on the nose of nine, find the car in Bay 86. Red Peugeot, like they said. Ordinary saloon, not one of the hatchback jobs. The key opens the door and fits the ignition. I try it on the boot, which seems to be locked, but it doesn't fit. Needs a different key. Never mind.

On the back seat there's this suitcase as per—one of those that sort of opens up like a big wallet with a zip three-quarters of the way round. Then inside there's straps to hold your clothes in. One side, strapped in, is this hard rectangular package wrapped in cloth. Got to be the copy of the painting, but I don't think it's the moment to have a dekko. I take my gear out of the polythene carrier I got it in and strap the lot in the other side. Just clothes, shaving tackle. And a pair of metal-cutters. Oh, and a thing called a priest. Little

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stick with a weighted tip. Fishermen use them to finish off fish. Mine's clobbered a few slimy customers in its time. I wouldn't ever carry a shooter, but the priest's handy.

Car starts first turn of the key, so I reckon it had only been left there that morning. In the glove compartment, there's the parking ticket. Clocked in 8:12. Pity I hadn't thought to arrive earlier. Be nice to know who I was dealing with, apart from the steamy "Mr. Loxton."

There was the right money in the glove compartment for the parking. Seemed a bit steep for such a short stay and I mentioned this to the bloke at the barrier.

"Rates just gone up, mate. Here's the new tariff." And he give me a printed sheet with my receipt.

I shoved it in my pocket. I should worry. Wasn't my money I was spending.

I never really thought it would be; but the Stately Home Weekend was way off my scene. I mean, we was treated all right, you know—all the staff deferential and that, trying to give you the feeling of being privileged—but you got the feeling they didn't really mean it, like they was sniggering behind their hands all the time.

Okay, some things we was allowed to do that the ordinary day-trippers wasn't. We could leave our cars directly in front of the house, we could go through most of the doors marked "Private," we was actually allowed to *sit* on the chairs, but all the time they was pretending to treat us like regular house-party guests the staff seemed to be just watching out for us to make fools of ourselves—I mean, like turning up in the wrong clothes or not picking the right knives and forks at meals. They really seemed to be on the lookout for that sort of thing. And I'm afraid for me it was particularly difficult. Social graces didn't figure in the Borstal educational curriculum.

Mind you, the other punters seemed to lap it up. I saw they was getting the old sneers from the staff just as much as I was, but they didn't seem to notice. They really thought they was being treated just like house guests, like they was there by personal invite of Lord Harbinger and not paying through the nose for the privilege of lounging around his gaff and seeing him for a rationed hour and a half of tea and farewells on the Sunday afternoon.

Also, let's face it, they wasn't really my sort of people. I daresay

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I got a lot of flaws in my character, but one thing nobody's ever called me is a snob. And that's what this lot was, every one of them.

A lot of them was Americans, and in fact they was generally less offensive than the English ones. I mean, their grasp on culture was so sketchy that all they seemed to do was keep saying how old everything was. Apparently Harbinger Hall had been featured in some naff television series they'd seen over there and they spent a lot of time walking round the place acting out their favorite bits and taking photos of each other in various settings. Funny lot, the Yanks, I always thought that.

Still, they was at least friendly. The English punters reckoned as soon as they saw me that I wasn't "their sort of person." Dead right they was, too. I wouldn't want to be some nasty little factory owner who just because he's made a bit of bread reckons he can go around buying breeding. I may not have a lot in the way of social gloss, but at least it's all mine.

Anyway, the English ones certainly disapproved of me. I'd catch them talking behind their hands about me when I come in the room. "Sticks out like a sore thumb," I heard one cheeky little pickle manufacturer say. "You'd think they'd vet the applications of people who come on these weekends."

Under other circumstances I'd have pushed the little git's false teeth out the other end, but I remembered that I wasn't meant to be drawing attention to myself, so I laid off him.

You'll have got the impression by now that the company wasn't that great, and let me tell you the entertainment, so-called, was even worse. Dear oh dear. I already told you my views on history, and I really thought that old git of a guide had said everything there was to say and a bit more about Harbinger Hall when I done my day-trip. Don't you believe it. For the Stately Home Weekend, they got in blooming professors of history to take us through the lot, Duke by Duke. Then another berk come and took us through the family portraits—and, as if that weren't enough, some snooty old blue-rinse give us a lecture on Eighteenth Century housekeeping. Tell you, I done some boring jobs in my time, but I'd rather spend a solid week watching for some fence to come out of his front door than ever sit through that lot again.

The Medieval Banquet wasn't no better. My idea of a good Saturday night is going out for a few beers and, if you're feeling a bit exotic, ending up at the Chinkie or the Indian, not sitting in front of seventeen knives and forks while gits march up and down holding

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

up stuffed pigs and peacocks. As a general rule, I don't mind music, either—good sing-song round the Joanna or a nice tape of James Last, Abba, that sort of number—but please God may I never again be put in a position where I have to act natural while listening to a bunch of birds singing madrigals to a lute.

But I stuck at it, like a right little swot. Fixed my mind steadily on the old five grand. Or maybe on a bit more than that.

Being the size I am, I got a pretty well developed appetite, and all them lectures and that had sharpened it a bit, so, even though they wasn't serving anything I fancied, I had a good go at all this stuffed pig and peacock and fruit tarts and what-have-you. Even forced myself to drink some of the mead, which is not an experience I'd recommend to anyone with taste buds.

Anyway, result of all this is, I wake up in bed round one in the morning with this dreadful heartburn. Well, it's more than heartburn, really. It's that round the chest, but it seems to be moving down the body and turning into something less tasteful. Not to put too fine a point on it, I have to get to the bog in a hurry.

Well, they're real mean with the wattage on the landings and, sense of direction never having been my special subject, I go through all kinds of corridors and staircases before I find what I'm looking for.

And, dear oh dear, when I get there, what a spectacle it is. Blooming great dark-wood seat like something out of an old rowing boat, and the pan's got all these pink and blue roses all over it. Out the back there's this sort of plunger like it was going to detonate a bomb. You'd really think in a place like Harbinger Hall they'd get decent facilities. I mean, more like the sort of thing my brother-in-law's got—low-level avocado with matching sink and gold-plated dolphin flush-handle. Still, I'm in no condition to bother about Lord Harbinger's lack of design sense. It's lock the door, down with the pajama trousers, and settle in for a long session.

Embarrassing though it is to confess, I'm afraid I must've dozed off. Mead must've got to me. Because next thing I know I'm hearing voices. I don't mean hearing voices like loonies hear, I mean there's a couple of geysers nattering outside the bog door. So I holds my breath (among other things) and listens.

Well, first thing is, I recognize one of the voices. Told you I was good on them, didn't I? Yes, you guessed—Mr. Loxton from the sauna, wasn't it?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I saw our contact this afternoon," he's saying. "All set up for tomorrow evening. It'll be a quick handover."

"That's not what I'm worried about. It's the bit before."

"It'll be fine. I've talked to the staff and it sounds as if the other guests are certainly going to remember him."

"But if he's as dumb as he appears, are you sure he's capable of actually doing what he's meant to?"

"It's not difficult. If he does blow it, we just call the police and have him arrested."

"Not keen on that," the other says sharply. His voice was older, real upper-crusty, sounded like a Cabinet Minister being interviewed, know what I mean? "Police might want to investigate a bit too deeply. No, we've got to hope the whole affair goes through as planned."

"I'm sure it will." Mr. Loxton sounds all soothing and— what's the word? —you know, like a headwaiter who thinks he's going to get a big tip.

"Yes. And you're sure he's not suspicious?"

"No chance. Picked with great care. He's as thick as two short planks."

"Good. Goodnight."

The older voice was moving away. I unlocked the door dead and quiet and risked a quick flash through the crack. The one who's just spoken's out of sight, but I see the other just as he's said "Goodnight." Mr. Loxton's voice. Mean-looking bastard he is when you blow the steam away. But important thing is, he's wearing the striped trousers and that of one of the Harbinger Hall staff. As I suspected, I'm part of an inside job.

That's not all I've learnt, though. Maybe it's the reference to "two short planks," which I've heard more than once in my passage through life, but I feel sure Loxton and his chum was talking about me.

I've forgotten my gutrot by the time I get back into bed. Can't be distracted by things like that—need all my mind for thinking.

I can't work out what's happening yet, but I know it's something I don't like. I been set up a few times in my career, and there's a feeling you get when it happens. You don't know the details, but you know something's not kosher. Like when your bird's having it off with someone else.

I go through the whole thing to myself, listening out for the bits

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that don't ring true. I try to remember if there was any little bits struck me as odd at the time. And I come up with a few.

First, there's the fact that Wally Clinton put up my name. Now, like I explained, he had no reason to sugar-daddy on me. I nearly shopped him once and he had to give a very big birthday present to the boys in blue to get off the hook. Wasn't my fault, but Wally was never bothered by details like that.

My first thought is Wally's just out to get his own back, get me nicked when I cut through the alarm cables, but somehow that don't match the wallpaper. It's too complicated. He don't need to bring in Loxton and all this setup. And two and a half grand's a month's takings to a smalltimer like Clinton. He's not going to throw it away on me.

"Picked with great care," Loxton said. What's that mean? I begin to wonder. Think about my reputation in the business, where, as I happened to mention, I am reckoned a complete dumbo who'll do whatever he's told without question.

That's it, of course. Loxton wanted someone guaranteed thick as a bunch of duvets—and Wally Clinton recommended me.

Hurtful though this conclusion is, I don't dwell on it. If that is the case, other things follow. Yes, I'm being set up, but set up for something bigger than revenge for Wally. I try to think what else in the deal needs a deodorant.

I remember that right from the start I'd been impressed by the efficiency of the villains I was dealing with. Attention to detail. They'd given me instructions you couldn't go wrong with. They'd paid back my exact expenses. They'd even left the right money for the parking in Cavendish Square.

That thought stopped me. Cavendish Square Garage was where the car was meant to go back to. I was to drive there from Harbinger Hall. On my little lonesome. They'd set the whole thing up real tight until I left the Hall and then I could do what I liked. I know they thought I was thick, but surely even someone thick was going to realize that there was other things they could do with a couple of millionsworth of canvas than leave it in a garage. Considering the care they'd taken with everything else, they really hadn't thought that bit through. Why?

Something else suddenly barged into my mind. I went across to where my bomber jacket was hanging and felt in the pocket. The new price-list the bloke at the garage had given me.

There it was. Give me a nasty turn when I saw it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE GARAGE IS CLOSED ALL DAY SUNDAYS.

They hadn't bothered to think through the details of the handover once I'd stolen the painting, because they knew I wasn't going to get that far.

Then I remembered the other thing that didn't fit in. The locked boot of the Peugeot.

Picking locks isn't my number-one talent, but I got a decent set of skeletons and I get by. Could've done the Peugeot boot quicker with a jemmy, but I didn't want no one to see I been snooping. So I was patient and after about ten minutes had it open.

And what a treasure trove my little pencil torch lit up inside. Complete Do-It-Yourself burglar kit. Sets of chisels, jemmies, wire-snips, pliers, big crowbar, the lot. Stethoscope, too, presumably for the old listening-to-the-tumblers routine when opening safes. Not that many villains do that nowadays.

Don't use dynamite much, either. Not in sticks. Plastic explosive's much easier to handle. Less likely to have accidents. Still, whoever had stocked out that car boot reckoned I might need dynamite for the odd safe-job.

They also reckoned I was going to need something else. The rectangular outline of the suitcase was familiar, and that of the cloth-wrapped object inside even more so. I felt the knobbly ridges of the frame as I undid it.

It was a painting, of course. Same size as the Madonna. Old like the Madonna. But it wasn't the Madonna. Difficult to see what it was, actually. Or what it had been. The paint was all flaked and stained. Could have been anything. Can't imagine anyone would have given two quid for that one, let alone two million.

But the odd thing about it was that screwed to the frame at the bottom there was this brass plate, which said:

MADONNA AND CHILD
Giacomo Palladino
Florentine
(1473–1539)

Someone was certainly setting me up, but I couldn't right then work out what for.

The Sunday was as boring as the Saturday. Some gamekeeper git give us a long lecture on grouse-shooting, there was a berk who went on about coats of arms, the Traditional Sunday Lunch was full of gristle, and whoever done the gravy ought to be copped under the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Trades Descriptions Act. I mean, if the upper classes have been fed gravy like that since the Norman Conquest no wonder they're a load of wimps.

The afternoon was, in the words of the old brochure, "less structured." That meant, thank God, they couldn't think of anything else to bore us silly with. Guests were encouraged to wander round the grounds until the great moment of tea with Lord Harbinger.

I didn't bother to go out. I just lay on my bed and thought. I was piecing things together. Though nasty things have been said about it, there is nothing wrong with my intellect. It just works slowly. Give it time and it'll get there.

Trouble is, thinking takes it out of me, and I must've dozed off. When I come to, it was quarter to five and the old Royal Command tea had started at four-thirty.

I got up in a hurry. Half of me was working out what was up, but the other half was still following instructions. I had to behave naturally, go through the weekend without drawing attention to myself.

As I hurried across the landing, I looked out through the big front window. I could see the red Peugeot parked right outside.

And I could see Mr. Loxton closing the boot and moving away from it. Thought I'd be safely inside having my tea, didn't you, Mr. Loxton?

The tea give me the last important fact. As soon as I was introduced to Lord Harbinger, it all come together.

"Good afternoon," he said with a reasonable stab at enthusiasm. "Delighted to welcome you to Harbinger Hall."

It was the voice, wasn't it? The bloke Loxton had been speaking to the night before. I realized just how inside an inside job it was.

And I realized other things that give me a nasty tickly feeling in my belly.

Half past five, the tea broke up. Lord Harbinger switched off like a lightbulb and, in spite of the Americans who would have liked to go on mingling with the aristocracy forever, everyone was hustled out of the drawing room to go and get packed. I went up to my bedroom like the rest.

Wasn't a lot to pack, was there? But for the first time I took a butcher's at the package in my suitcase. After what I seen in the car boot the night before, could have been anything.

But no. It was a copy of the Madonna. Bloody good, too. I couldn't

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have told it apart from the real thing. But then I don't know much about art, do I?

Ten to six, following my instructions to the letter, down I go to the hall, leaving my suitcase in the bedroom. There's already a few of the punters milling around and piles of cases. Casual like, I take a glance at these and see, as I expected, that there's one there just like the one I left in the bedroom. Expensive for them on suitcases, this job. Mind you, if it all worked, they'd be able to afford it.

I hear Loxton's voice suddenly, whispering to Lord Harbinger. "I'll get away as quickly as I can afterward."

"Fine," says the noble peer.

Just before six, most of the punters have arrived and the Harbinger Hall staff are all starting to make a farewell line like something out of a television serial. The Americans think this is wonderful and start cooing. "Oh, blimey," I say loudly, "forget my own head next!" Then, for the benefit of the people who've turned round to look at me, I add, "Only forgotten my blooming case, haven't I?"

They turn away with expressions of distaste, and I beetle upstairs. Do it by the book. To my bedroom, pick up the suitcase, to the Long Gallery, down the Private staircase. Out with the old metal-cutters, reach for the cables at the top of the alarm boxes, snip, snip. I'm tense then, but there's no noise.

Into the Great Hall, put the suitcase on the table. Unzip it all the way round, take the copy of the Madonna out of its cloth wrappings, and do what I have to do.

Slam the case shut, back up the stairs, Long Gallery, bedroom, back down the main staircase towards the hall, stop on the stairs, panting a bit. Whole operation—three and a half minutes.

Now you've probably gathered that I've got this unfortunate reputation for bogging things up. Just when the job's nearly done, something always seems to go wrong. Bad luck I call it, but it's happened so often that some people have less desirable descriptions.

So, anyway, there I am standing on the stairs in front of all these people and I reach up to wipe my brow and—you'll never believe it—I haven't had time to zip up my suitcase again and I'm still holding the handle and it falls open. My aftershave and what-have-you clatters down the stairs with my pajamas—and there, still strapped in the suitcase for all to see, is the Harbinger Madonna.

"My God!" says Lord Harbinger.

I say a rude word.

Various servants come forward and grab me. Others are sent off

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to the Great Hall to see the damage. Loxton's the first one back. He looks dead peeved. "My Lord, the alarm wires have been cut! He's replaced the Madonna with a copy!"

"What!" Lord Harbinger blusters.

"Shall I call the police, my Lord?" asks another servant.

"Um—"

"All right." I shrug. "It's a fair cop. Story of my life. Every job I seem to screw up. And this one I really thought I'd worked out to the last detail."

"Shall I call the police, my Lord?" the servant asks again.

"Um—"

"You better," I say. "I really have got caught with the goods this time. I'm afraid the police are going to want a really thorough investigation into this."

"Ye-es." His Lordship sounds uncertain. "Under normal circumstances of course I'd call the police straightaway, but this is rather—um—awkward."

"Why?" I ask. "I'm not pretending I haven't done it."

"No, but, er—" Then finally he gets on the right track. "But you're a guest in my house. It's not part of the code of the Harbingers to call the police to their guests, however they may have offended the laws of hospitality."

"Oh," I say.

"Gee," says one of the Americans. "Isn't this just *wonderful?*"

Harbinger's getting into his stride by now. He does a big point to the door like out of some picture and he says, "Leave my house!"

I go down the rest of the stairs. "Better not take this, had I, I suppose?" I hold up the Madonna.

"No."

I hand it over, sort of reluctant. "You better keep the copy. I got no use for it now. And I suppose the police will want to look at that. Might be able to trace back who ordered it."

"Yes," says his Lordship abruptly. "Or rather, no. You take that back with you."

"But—"

"No. If the police could trace you through the copy, I would be offending the rules of hospitality just as much as if I had you arrested. You take the copy with you."

"But I don't want it."

"*You will take it, sir!*" he bellows.

"Oh, all right," I say grudgingly.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Oh, this is so *British!*" says one of the Americans. Made her weekend, it had.

They give me the picture from the Great Hall, I put it in my suitcase, and I'm escorted out by Loxton. The punters and staff draw apart like I'm trying to sell them insurance.

Outside, Loxton says, "God, I knew you were thick and incompetent, but it never occurred to me that you'd be *that* thick and incompetent." I hang my head in shame.

"Now get in your car and go!"

"Oh, it's not my car," I say. "It's stolen. Way my luck's going, I'll probably get stopped by the cops on the way home. I'll go on the coach to the station."

Loxton doesn't look happy.

Takes a bit of time to get all the punters onto the bus. Loxton stands there fidgeting while further farewells are said. I sit at the back with my suitcase. Everyone else sits right up front. I'm in disgrace.

The bus starts off down the steep zigzag drive toward Limmerton. I look back to see Loxton rush toward the Peugeot, parked in front of Harbinger Hall. I look at my watch. Quarter to seven. All that delayed us quite a bit.

I see Loxton leap into the car. Without bothering to close the door, he starts it and slams her into reverse. He screeches backwards over the gravel.

But it's too late. The Hall's saved, but he isn't.

The back of the Peugeot erupts into a balloon of orange flame. From inside the bus, the sound is muffled. A few of the punters turn curiously, but just at that moment we swing round one of the hairpins and there's nothing to see.

I piece it together again in the train. They've left me in a compartment on my own. I'm still like some kind of leper. They all feel better having had their guesses at the sort of person I was confirmed.

Lord Harbinger had money problems. Cost a lot to keep the Hall going and the trippers weren't coming enough. Stately Home Weekends might bring in a few bob, but they took such a lot of staff there wasn't much percentage in it.

But he had got the Madonna. Couldn't just sell it—wouldn't look good, public admission of failure. Besides, either he or Loxton had worked out a scheme that'd make more than just selling it. They'd

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have it stolen, get the insurance, *and* sell it. But they needed a real mug to do the actual thieving.

Enter Yours Truly.

I had to raise suspicions when I came for my day-trip, then stick out like a sore thumb on the Stately Home Weekend. When I'd actually done the theft, switched the real Madonna for the copy, Loxton would have offered to take my bag to my car. He would have switched my suitcase for the empty one and put the Madonna in another car, in which he would later drive it up to London to do his deal with Mr. Depaldo's rival.

I would have driven off in the Peugeot, maybe full of plans to doublecross my paymasters and do a little deal of my own. They weren't worried what I had in mind, because they knew that half an hour away from Harbinger Hall the dynamite in the back of the car would explode. When the police came to check the wreckage, I would be identified as the geyser who'd been behaving oddly all weekend, the one who'd obviously cut the alarm cables and switched the paintings. My profession was obvious. There was my record if they ever put a name to me. And if not, there were all the tools of my trade in the boot of the car. Together with the dynamite, whose careless stowing caused my unfortunate demise.

And some burnt-out splinters of wood and shreds of canvas, which had once been a painting—a very old painting, tests would reveal. And the engraved brass plate which was likely to survive the blast would identify it as Giacomo Palladino's masterpiece, *Madonna and Child*. Another great art work would be tragically lost to the nation.

Had to admire it. It was a good plan.

They only got one thing wrong. Like a few others before them, they made the mistake of thinking Billy Gorse was as thick as he looked.

I felt good and relaxed. Pity the train hadn't got a buffet, I could have really done with a few beers.

Go to Red Rita's later, I thought. Yeah, be nice. Be nice to go away with her and all. Been looking a bit peaky lately. She could do with a change. South America, maybe?

I got my suitcase down from the rack and opened it.

Found it grew on me, that Madonna.

And I was very glad I hadn't changed the two pictures round in the Great Hall.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I may not know much about art, but I'm beginning to realize what it's worth.

"Q"

ON OUR COVER

Simon Brett is one of England's most highly acclaimed mystery writers. He is the creator of two distinct amateur sleuths: the roguish, usually out-of-work actor, Charles Paris, and the amiable rich widow, Mrs. Melita Pargeter. Paris made his debut in the 1976 novel, *Cast, In Order of Disappearance,* and with the publication of his thirteenth and most recent adventure, *A Series of Murders* (Charles Scribner's Sons), he continues to solve mysteries in a wickedly funny way. The Charles Paris novels are most laudable for their wit and intriguing backstage details. The Mrs. Pargeter mysteries (two to date, *A Nice Class of Corpse* and *Mrs. Presumed Dead*) are told with the same distinct touch of class and mordant humor readers have come to expect from Simon Brett.

Brett was born in Surrey, England, in 1945 and graduated from Oxford in 1967. A former president of the Oxford University Dramatic Society, he appeared in cabarets and revues there and directed the Oxford Theatre Groups late-night show at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 1967. His first job out of Oxford was as Santa Claus in a department store. He then spent ten years as light-entertainment producer for BBC Radio before taking up a similar post with London Weekend Television.

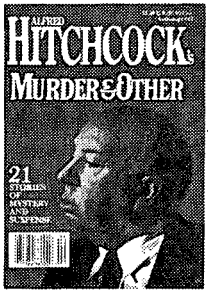
In addition to his mystery novels, he is the author of two novels of psychological suspense, one of which, *A Shock to the System* (excerpted in EQMM July 1986) was an Edgar nominee for Best Novel of the Year and is to be made into a movie. Mr. Brett also writes plays and scripts for radio and television. He lives in West Sussex with his wife and three children.

He will be guest of honor at the Bouchercon World Mystery Convention in Philadelphia in October—at which Dorothy Salisbury Davis will receive the lifetime achievement award.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ALFRED HITCHCOCK's MURDER & OTHER Mishaps

Want to catch a murderer?



Want to catch a thief?
Linger in the darkness of a turreted mansion or merge with the shadows in a wax museum. Follow the written paths of those 21 outstanding practitioners of crime on paper.

Please send me the ALFRED HITCHCOCK ANTHOLOGIES indicated.
Enclosed is my check for $ _____.

Mail to: ALFRED HITCHCOCK ANTHOLOGIES
P.O. Box 40
Vernon, NJ 07462

- ☐ #27 MURDER & OTHER MISHAPS ($4.50)
- ☐ #26 SHROUDS AND POCKETS ($4.50)
- ☐ #25 MOST WANTED ($4.50)
- ☐ #24 THE SHADOW OF SILENCE ($4.50)
- ☐ #23 A BRIEF DARKNESS ($4.50)
- ☐ #22 A MYSTERY BY THE TALE ($4.50)
- ☐ #21 WORDS OF PREY ($4.50)
- ☐ #19 GRAVE SUSPICIONS ($3.50)
- ☐ #18 CRIME WATCH ($3.50)
- ☐ #17 MORTAL ERRORS ($3.50)
- ☐ #15 BORROWERS OF THE NIGHT ($3.50)
- ☐ #13 DEATHREACH ($3.50)

M7NC-0

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for delivery of your copy. Available only in the U.S.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE JURY BOX

by JON L. BREEN

Of the several large reference volumes offering a critical guide to mystery fiction, the first, one of the best, and certainly the most controversial was Jacques Barzun and Wendell Hertig Taylor's *A Catalogue of Crime,* first published in 1971. The long-awaited revised edition, completed by Barzun after Taylor's death in 1985, is now available (Harper and Row, $50.00). The book is substantially expanded and improved: there are now 5,045 total entries, up from 3,476, and the largest section, commenting on novels in the genre, has gone from 2,304 to 3,549. Many writers who emerged in the Seventies and Eighties are covered, some substantially and approvingly (Simon Brett, Robert Barnard, Dorothy Simpson), others unenthusiastically and/or dismissively (Sue Grafton, Tony Hillerman, Herbert Resnicow). Whether you share the traditional biases of B&T or not—they have a strong preference for British classicists like John Rhode and are much worried by "bad language" in contemporary mysteries—prepare to be alternately delighted and enraged.

*** John Ball: *The Van,* St. Martin's, $18.95. Sociology professor Flavia de la Torre, doing a study of crimes committed by parolees, is permitted access to homicide scenes by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and becomes involved in a terrifying series of rape/mutilation murders committed in an inconspicuous van. The longest and one of the best of the late author's police procedurals, the book provides an appropriate climax to the career of a consummate storyteller. Ball's officers are of a uniform nobility, carrying on despite a justice system that is consistently stacked in the criminal's favor.

*** Robert Campbell: *Juice,* Poseidon, $18.95. The prolific creator of sleuths Jimmy Flannery, Whistler, and Jake Hatch presents a non-series crime novel centering on the various clients and henchmen of Alfonso "Puffy" Pachulo, a Los Angeles juiceman (loanshark). The complex, well managed story is carried along by a colorful style, an unerring ear for speech, and a gallery of quirky characters that sometimes suggest a crime-writing Steinbeck.

*** Loren D. Estleman: *Silent Thunder,* Houghton Mifflin, $16.95. Amos Walker investigates a case involving the Detroit gun trade. No one observes the private-eye conventions—from the snappy dialogue and picturesque narration to the bottle in the desk drawer and the blow on the head—more faithfully or more effectively than Estleman. Walker even offers a fresh variation on the familiar Sherlockian dictum: "After you've eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth—unless you were a little too hasty the first time."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*** Ellis Peters: *A Rare Benedictine,* Mysterious, $19.95. Three Brother Cadfael short stories—"A Light on the Road to Woodstock," "The Price of Light," and "Eye Witness"—originally published in the Winter's Crimes anthology series do not really amount to book-length wordage, but the Medieval monk detective's admirers won't want to be without this handsomely produced collector's item, which includes several color illustrations by Clifford Harper.

*** Amanda Cross: *A Trap for Fools,* Dutton, $16.95. Kate Fansler, English professor at a New York university resembling Columbia, turns detective once again when a well hated professor of Middle Eastern studies falls to his death from his office window. The observations of campus politics and social issues from the perspective of Kate, a self-admitted knee-jerk liberal who can sometimes sound like an elitist snob, are the biggest attraction, but the whodunit element is also nicely done. The frequently voiced charge that Cross's characters all sound alike has some validity, but they express themselves too well for serious complaint from this department.

*** E. X. Giroux: *A Death for a Dreamer,* St. Martin's $14.95. Barrister Robert Forsythe and secretary Abigail Sanderson, who is becoming more and more of a co-equal sleuth with her employer, return for their seventh case, another strong traditional whodunit. It begins with a dispute among the trustees of a retirement home over a program that provides residents with puppies, courtesy of a dogfood manufacturer. A very funny scene describes the filming of a commercial for Perky Puppy Puffs at the home.

** Jessica Fletcher and Donald Bain: *Gin and Daggers,* McGraw-Hill, $17.95. In the first of a new series of hardcover spinoffs of the *Murder, She Wrote* TV series, Cabot Cove, Maine's Jessica visits London to speak at a convention of mystery writers and looks into the murder of a world-famous colleague whose last effort is rumored to have been ghostwritten. Though the book has its moments—the reading of the will is rather fun—it's hard to understand why even a fan of the TV show would pick this lackluster exploitation effort over the really good classical mysteries being published—e.g., the two above. (Bain is said by the publisher to be "the ghostwriter of a bestselling mystery series." The Margaret Truman books, maybe?)

Among the reprints is the late Sara Woods' 1983 novel, *The Lie Direct* (Avon, $3.95), one of the better latter-day cases of barrister Antony Maitland, whose client stands accused of both treason and bigamy. Reversing the usual progression is a 1962 paperback original now reprinted in hardcover, John D. MacDonald's fine novel of corporate intrigue, *A Key to the Suite* (Mysterious, $17.95).

The semipro mystery magazine *Hardboiled* published its tenth issue in spring 1989 and announced, rumors of its demise to the contrary, it would continue to be published twice a year. Issue #10

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

concludes the serialization begun in #8 of Max Allan Collins' first Nolan novel, *Mourn the Living*, written when the author was nineteen and never before published. As would be expected, it is not quite up to the standard of his more polished later work, but it is definitely readable and entertaining apart from its importance in the development of an outstanding writer. Other contributors to *Hardboiled*'s last three issues include such familiar names as Andrew Vachss, Herb Resnicow, Marv Lachman, Paul Bishop, Joe R. Lansdale, Hal Charles, and (in collaboration) Josh Pachter and Michael Avallone. Issue #10 carries a cover price of $2.95. For back-issue and subscription information, write the editor (himself an expert writer of tough private-eye fiction), Wayne D. Dundee, 620 17th Street, Rockford, IL 61104.

Though the number of professional magazine markets for mystery fiction are at an all-time low, there are more mystery anthology series than ever before, including the annual MWA collections, the continuing volumes of selections from *EQMM* and *AHMM*, Robert J. Randisi's Private Eye Writers of America compilations, Ed Gorman's Black Lizard volumes, Edward D. Hoch's *Year's Best* collections, and the British *Winter's Crimes*. One of the most interesting is Dembner Books' regional mystery series, the latest of which is *Murder and Mystery in Maine* ($16.95), edited by Charles G. Waugh, Frank D. McSherry, Jr., and Martin H. Greenberg. Along with contributions from contemporaries like Kemelman, Highsmith, Van de Wetering, MacLeod, and Hoch, the editors have unearthed some rarities, such as Holman F. Day's interesting 1905 jury-room story, "On the Evidence." Earlier volumes in the series, both published in 1987, are *Murder and Mystery in Boston* ($15.95) and *Murder and Mystery in Chicago* ($16.95), edited by Carol-Lynn Rossel Waugh, Greenberg, and McSherry. The latter features "The Spotted Pup," a Dorothy B. Hughes novelette unavailable for over forty years.

© 1989 by Jon L. Breen.

"Q"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DETECTIVERSE

ANOTHER GRAVE TONE

by JAMES HOLDING

Kind stranger, pause to shed a tear
For the young delinquent buried here.
Freddie Fairfax was his name—
Malicious mischief was his game.
At five, he learned the perverse joys
Of breaking other children's toys,
And as he grew, so grew his lust
To bust and bust and bust and bust—
Until the fatal moment when a
Towering TV antenna
Fixed to an absent neighbor's roof
Seemed so lofty, so aloof,
It raised in Fred the vandal urge
To smash, demolish, punish, purge.
So Fred climbed up and tore it loose,
And in the process cooked his goose—
A power line ran overhead,
The antenna touched it—goodbye, Fred.

© *1989 by James Holding.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* Michael Vlado story by

EDWARD D. HOCH

"We will never get rich in this country!" Zoran said with disgust, snatching the coins from his wife's hand as she finished the count.

"Then begone from us!" Rajko told him, leaning close as he spat out the words.

Zoran merely smiled and asked, "Why do so many Rom in this area cover their teeth with gold? You must be rich, to carry your money in your mouth."

"They will have their knives out in another minute," Cashmere remarked, coming to sit by Michael in the shadow of the wagon.

"Can't you calm your husband down?"

"I lost a tooth the last time I tried it," she told him. "Now I let him fight if he has a mind to. If he dies, he dies . . . "

THE GYPSY BEAR

by EDWARD D. HOCH

It was on one of Michael Vlado's periodic journeys into the city to buy supplies for his horses that he encountered the dancing bear named Vladimir. He was a big brown beast, a bit shaggy, but friendly in appearance, and about five feet tall when he stood on his hind legs.

Michael liked the bear at once but couldn't say as much for its owners, a Gypsy couple with two small children and a horse-drawn wagon. In the Romany world, bear tamers were only one step above beggars and looked down upon by most other Gypsies. As he petted the animal, Michael was aware of the owners' eyes on him. Finally the man came over and warned, "Be careful, Vladimir's been known to bite strangers."

"Never one offering money, though," the woman said, trying out

© 1989 by Edward D. Hoch.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her smile on Michael. She was young—barely out of her teens despite the two children—and looked like a dirty-haired child herself. She wore a plain grey sweater, a multicolored skirt that hung unevenly below her knees, and a scarf that seemed to match the skirt.

Her husband's name was Zoran Nikoli and her name was Cashmere. They had come up from Turkey earlier in the year, working their way through Bulgaria and into Romania, living on what the bear earned and what they could beg. "Do you have a Gypsy village nearby?" the man asked Michael.

"Up in the mountains," Michael answered, purposely vague. "I've come down to buy supplies."

"We have been traveling long and are looking for a place to stay. The police have told us to move from this park."

"Romania isn't a friendly place for Gypsies," Michael told them. "In fact, the government's official position is that there are no Gypsies at all in the country—despite the fact that our nineteen seventy-seven census showed nearly a quarter of a million."

Zoran Nikoli was unimpressed. "We are travelers, unconcerned with governments and boundary lines."

The bear had begun to lick Michael's hand in a gesture of friendship and as Michael patted the furry head, he relented a bit. "You could stay in our village for a short time if you wish. It's about two hours from here."

"Who is the king of your tribe?" Cashmere asked.

"Our king died last year. I have assumed his powers."

"Such a young man to be a Gypsy king!" she marveled.

"Not as young as all that. I was born during the war and named for King Michael, the Romanian leader at the time."

A small crowd had begun to gather around the wagon, attracted by Vladimir. Performing bears were a rare sight in the city—a rare sight even for local Gypsies—and among the spectators Michael recognized Rajko, a gold-toothed Rom from a nearby village. Zoran and Cashmere were quick to react to this sudden display of interest. Zoran produced a drum and a long pole and the bear went into his act. While Zoran beat out a crude rhythm on the drum, he guided Vladimir through its dance routine with the pole and a chain around its neck.

Rajko spotted Michael and came over to stand by him. "Who are these beggars with their bear?" he asked.

"They come from Turkey."

"Then better they go back there. The girl has the evil eye."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When Vladimir had completed his performance, the two children ran among the spectators with wicker baskets held out for donations. Michael noticed only a few lei were thrown in and he added a ten-leu coin himself.

Zoran watched as Cashmere counted up the coins. "We will never get rich in this country!" he said with disgust, snatching the coins from her hand as she finished the count.

"Then begone from us!" Rajko told him, leaning close as he spat out the words.

Zoran merely smiled and asked, "Why do so many Rom in this area cover their teeth with gold? You must be rich, to carry your money in your mouth."

Michael could see that the two men were fast becoming enemies. It was true that Romanian Gypsies liked to cap their teeth with gold, but he'd never heard it remarked on before. It was a custom he took for granted. "They will have their knives out in another minute," Cashmere remarked, coming to sit by Michael in the shadow of the wagon.

"Can't you calm your husband down?"

"I lost a tooth the last time I tried it. Now I let him fight if he has a mind to. If he dies, he dies."

"We live very differently in my village," he told her. "We respect human life."

As he spoke, Rajko made an insulting remark to Zoran and the Turkish Gypsy drew his knife before Michael could move: "Bite on this with your gold teeth!" he snarled, lunging forward. Rajko went over backward trying to ward off the blade and the two rolled in the dust, locked in combat. Cashmere leaped to her feet, but only to secure Vladimir's chain before the suddenly freed bear decided to wander off on its own.

Michael cursed softly and reluctantly entered the fray, first trying unsuccessfully to pull the men apart and then placing a few well directed kicks with his heavy boots. Finally Rajko broke free and crawled away. Michael's boot came down on Zoran's hand before it could reach the knife again and the brief battle was over.

"Get out of here," Michael told the local Gypsy. "We've had enough fighting for one day." Rajko grumbled but moved away, his passion cooling.

Cashmere bent over her husband and wiped the streak of blood from his lips. "Are you all right?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'll live," he muttered, rubbing his hip where Michael's final kick had landed.

"It's best you move on," Michael told them. "A visit to my village could bring you into further contact with Rajko. He lives not far from there."

"With larger crowds we might get more money for Vladimir's performance," Cashmere speculated. "The place for us is in the cities, Zoran."

But Zoran was undecided and they agreed to spend the night camped in the city—in the morning they would press on, possibly to Bucharest, or follow Michael to his mountain village for a few days. While Zoran went off to buy food with their meager supply of coins, Michael remained with Cashmere in the event Rajko returned to cause trouble. The bear dance and the fight over, the crowd had drifted away. It was late afternoon, and growing chilly.

"Do you have a wife back in your village?" Cashmere asked.

"Yes, I do."

"Of course. The king of a Gypsy tribe would have the most beautiful wife in the village."

"I think she's beautiful."

The bear was growing restless, fretting at its chain. Cashmere tried to soothe him, speaking in a soft, almost musical tone. "He is a big baby," she told Michael after she had succeeded in settling him down.

"You're very good with him. Did you train him?"

"I raised him from a cub. But Zoran taught him to dance."

"Have you ever trained other animals?"

She ran a finger through her tangled hair. "Last year in Turkey I tried a goat. They're supposed to be easy to train, but I had no luck."

Michael nodded. "The Gypsy Esmeralda had a goat in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame.*"

"What's that?"

"A famous book by Victor Hugo."

"Ah," she said with a touch of sadness. "I cannot read."

At that moment Michael felt a great pity for this woman with her children and her bear. There were so many others like her. He wanted to tell her to flee from her brutal husband, who had once knocked out her tooth, who drew a knife at the least provocation. But it was not his affair.

Soon Zoran returned with some food and Michael departed, prom-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ising to return early in the morning to learn their decision. He petted the bear as he left and was rewarded by a rough lick of his hand.

Michael spent the night at a small inn where he'd stayed before when business or a sudden storm kept him from driving back up the mountain road to Gravita. He knew his wife Rosanna wouldn't worry unless he was absent a second night.

In the morning he slept later than planned and was rudely awakened by a pounding on the door of his room. He opened the door and was surprised to see his friend Captain Segar of the government militia, the law-enforcement body of the region. "Michael," Segar greeted him, "get dressed—it's time you were up and about!"

"It's barely seven o'clock."

"A Gypsy has been killed."

"In a knife fight?" Michael asked without thinking.

Segar looked at him oddly. "That seems to have been the case. His wife mentioned you and told me where to find you."

"His wife— It was Zoran Nikoli?"

"That's his name. A Turk who came here with his family and a dancing bear."

Michael nodded, starting to dress. "I met them for the first time yesterday."

"What's this about a knife fight?"

"Zoran pulled a knife on another Gypsy yesterday. I managed to break it up."

"Who did he fight with?"

"Rajko, from the village of Siblu. It's near Gravita."

"I know the place, and I know Rajko. A troublemaker."

Michael finished dressing and picked up his leather jacket. "I'm ready. Let's go."

Zoran Nikoli had met his end less than a hundred yards from his camp site in the park. Captain Segar lifted the plastic sheet to show Michael the body, but one glance was enough. The knife wound had been to the throat and the weapon was still in the wound. It appeared to be Zoran's own knife, the one he'd drawn against Rajko the previous afternoon.

"Corporal Havers found the body," Segar said, motioning toward a pale young man in the uniform of the auxiliary militia. In some cities with a limited police force, the militia used auxiliary members

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for street patrol, especially at night. "Tell him what you know, Corporal."

Havers offered the beginning of a salute to Michael, which brought a smile from Segar. "No, no—it's not necessary to salute a Gypsy, even if he is a king."

The Corporal blushed and recovered himself. "I was on my usual patrol around four o'clock this morning when I heard voices down here in the park area," he told Michael. "It sounded like an argument, but I couldn't be sure. I started down the footpath and then I saw the body, lying right here."

"Was there anyone nearby?" Michael asked.

"It was still dark, but I thought I heard someone running away. The park is poorly lit at night. I could see no one."

"Was Zoran already dead?"

"He died within a minute or two. I blew my whistle to summon help."

"How did you know who he was?"

"He carried a Turkish passport in his pocket, and I remembered seeing him earlier with the dancing bear. When I told the Captain, he went to their wagon."

Michael turned to Segar. "What did his wife say?"

"It was a shock, I suppose. She didn't even know he was gone from the wagon. The children were with her and the bear was chained up nearby."

"She's seen the body?"

He nodded. "Someone had to identify him."

"I'd better go see her."

Michael found Cashmere sitting in the wagon with the children, looking tired and drained. She blinked her eyes as he lifted the flap and for an instant he thought she'd forgotten who he was. Then she said very quietly, "We won't be going."

"I know. What happened?"

"It was the bear. I knew he'd bring us bad luck."

"You mean Vladimir? How could—?"

"Zoran came here to deliver the bear to someone. I don't know what it was all about. He must have gone off to meet the person during the night, after the children and I were asleep."

"He didn't take the bear with him."

"I know nothing else!" she insisted. "I only want to be away from here! And now this Captain says we must stay until his investigation is complete!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Michael placed a reassuring hand on hers. "I'll speak to him," he promised.

He went over to Vladimir and ran his hands through the bear's thick brown fur. "What is it, boy?" he said, almost to himself. "Is there something valuable about you?" In response, the bear tried to lick his face.

Michael had visited Captain Segar at his office only once before, and the drab grey building still depressed him. He'd heard once that it had formerly been a convent for Orthodox nuns before the war and the coming of the Socialist government had forced it to close. Perhaps it was better suited to religious matters than secular ones, Michael thought as he climbed the wide wooden stairway to Segar's office on the second floor.

"Welcome, old friend!" the Captain greeted him. "Have a chair while I finish with this report."

"Is that about Zoran Nikoli?"

"Yes. We're still searching for Rajko, but so far my people have been unable to locate him. He may have returned to his village. I suppose I'll have to drive up there later today."

"Is Zoran's wife free to leave the city?"

Captain Segar looked up. "Why do you ask?"

"Before her husband's death I had offered them the hospitality of my village for a few days. It might be a good place for her to go now. I could even arrange for her husband's burial there."

"I need to find Rajko first."

"Suppose I trade you some information for her release."

Segar eyed him suspiciously. "What sort of information?"

"Zoran came here to sell or give his bear to someone. The implication is that the bear has some value other than as a bear."

Captain Segar picked up the dead man's passport. "He came from Turkey. I wonder if the poppy fields still flourish there."

"Drugs?"

"Has it ever occurred to you, Michael, that the routes of the modern drug trade in the Middle East and Europe are quite similar to the routes of Gypsy migration over the centuries?"

"There has never been any unusually large involvement of Gypsies with the drug trade, Captain, as you well know. The route you mention, across Turkey, has been the traditional land link between the Middle East and Europe for centuries. It's the *only* link, except through Russia."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Still, a bear could carry a valuable amount of drugs inside him, in some sort of plastic or metal capsules. Isn't that an old Gypsy trick, to take a child into a jewelry store and divert the owner's attention while he or she swallows a diamond ring?"

"Vladimir wouldn't be nearly as good-natured if he'd been forced to swallow a dozen or so capsules of narcotics," Michael assured him, his anger showing.

"You have to understand, Michael. My superiors know I'm friendly with you and other Gypsies, partly because I speak your language. In the past I've been accused of favoritism toward Gypsies. I can't show it in this case."

"Why are you so intent on pinning the crime on a Gypsy?"

Captain Segar sighed. "I hadn't wanted to get into this with you, Michael. I do it only because of our long friendship. We have three pieces of evidence pointing toward a Gypsy killer. First, he was killed with a Gypsy dagger."

"It was his own knife! I saw him use it earlier yesterday in the fight with Rajko."

"Second, Zoran Nikoli lived long enough to say one word before he died. The word was 'Gypsy.' "

"Does that mean I'm a suspect, too?"

"Come, Michael."

"Perhaps you should round up all the Gypsies in the city for questioning. What's your third piece of evidence?"

Segar opened his desk drawer and took out a plastic evidence bag that contained a bright, multicolored piece of cloth. "A Gypsy scarf. We found it under the body."

Michael tried to remember why the scarf seemed familiar. "Anyone can buy a Gypsy scarf," he argued. "There are probably shops selling them right here in the city."

"The three clues go together, Michael. They establish the likelihood that the killer is a Gypsy."

Michael Vlado got to his feet. "I'll see you later," he said, his anger undiminished.

He found a telephone book for the city and looked in the alphabetical listing under Gypsy. Perhaps the dying man hadn't meant that a Gypsy had killed him—he might have died before he could finish a phrase. Michael found several place listings beginning with Gypsy, but only one seemed likely to have been open anywhere near the time of Zoran's murder. It was a cafe called the Gypsy Pavilion

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and was located about a mile from the scene of the stabbing—not too far for Zoran to have walked, even in the middle of the night.

The Gypsy Pavilion was a big barn of a place, virtually empty when Michael reached it around noon. Except for a small lunch counter, most of the room was roped off, still being swept and mopped from the previous night's business. He imagined dancing, and much drinking of what passed for beer and wine in this sort of place. The manager was a bald man named Kammet who took in Michael's single gold earring with his first glance. "You've come to the right place, Gypsy, but you've come too early. The bar doesn't open until five o'clock."

"I want information, not a drink."

"What information?" The man wore a sheepskin vest, a favorite with Gypsies in the region, but Michael could see he wasn't one of them.

"Some Gypsies may have been here last night, after midnight."

"Not here. We close at midnight."

"A man named Zoran Nikoli?"

"I don't know the name. Actually, we get few Gypsies here. With the government's policy of not recognizing them, they stay clear of a place called the Gypsy Pavilion. Sometimes I think I should change the name to something else."

Unfamiliar with the city's night life, Michael had no way of verifying the man's words. Perhaps he told the truth. "Thank you, anyway," he said.

As he turned to leave, he saw a familiar figure coming through the door. It was the missing Rajko, his gold teeth glistening as they caught the light. But then Rajko saw Michael and in an instant he was out the door, running. Michael took off after him, cutting across the cobblestoned street in an attempt to head him off. "Rajko!" he shouted. "Come back—I only want to talk!"

But the man kept going, leaping a low fence with an agility that surprised Michael, who was growing short of breath. Then, with a stroke of luck, a youth on a motor scooter shot out of a side street directly in Rajko's path. The running Gypsy swerved to avoid a collision and slipped on a muddy spot. He went down hard, and before he could gain his feet again Michael was on top of him.

"Why do you run from a fellow Rom?" Michael demanded. "Have you done something that shames you even before Gypsies?"

Rajko struggled to his feet while Michael held a firm grip on his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

neck. "I've done nothing!" he panted. "I thought you came after me because of the other one, Zoran. The man deserves to *die*."

"Then he has already gained what he deserves. Someone killed him in the early hours this morning."

Rajko seemed startled. "Where was this? In the city?"

"Near where they camped in the park. Tell me about the bear, Rajko. Why were you so interested in it?"

"I?"

"You stopped to watch it perform."

"Only as the rest of the crowd did."

"You didn't know Zoran before? You didn't arrange to meet him in the park?"

"No—why would I?"

"And yet you ran from me just now."

"I told you—I feared you were in league with him. He nearly killed me with his knife!"

"If you are so innocent, come along with me."

"Where?" he asked, his eyes darting like a frightened animal.

"To see the dead man's widow. And the bear."

Rajko's lips twisted into a golden grin and he said, "You think the bear will betray me, or the widow with her evil eye?"

"Come along and we'll see."

Michael kept a firm grip on his captive all the way. He wasn't about to lose him again.

As they came in sight of the Gypsy wagon with its sad-looking horse, Michael saw Captain Segar talking with Cashmere. Segar glanced at Michael's prisoner and said, "This looks like the elusive Rajko."

"That's who it is."

"Why bother me with this business?" Rajko whined. "I know nothing about it."

"We'll see," Segar told him. "Come with me."

As he led Rajko to his car, Cashmere looked moodily after them. "What does he expect is at the bottom of this?"

"Drugs, perhaps. You told me Zoran came here to deliver the bear to someone."

"Zoran was never involved in drugs."

"What was it, then?"

"I don't know. He didn't tell me everything."

Half an hour later, Michael went back to Segar's vehicle, where

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Captain was finishing his interrogation of Rajko. Segar got out and delivered his verdict. "I don't see anything we can hold him for unless we can actually place him at the scene."

Rajko climbed gratefully out of the car. Segar didn't have to tell him twice that he was free to go.

"Now what?" Michael asked.

"You go home to your family. Cashmere and her children go wherever they want. Not every murder gets solved, you know. In the city, people are killed almost every day."

"Can we gamble one more night on this case?"

"On what?"

"If Zoran Nikoli came here to deliver the bear to someone, as Cashmere claims, he didn't succeed. He was killed first. If the person who wanted the bear still wants him, we can assume he might try to take Vladimir tonight, before Cashmere moves on."

Captain Segar nodded. "You want my men to stake out the place."

"No. I think the fewer people know about this, the better it will be. Suppose just you and I do it?"

Segar thought about it. "I've trusted you before, Michael, and you've always come through. I suppose I could take another chance."

Michael ventured a smile. "Then I'll get word to my wife that I'm staying one more night."

The children were asleep in the wagon, and Michael again mentioned the possibility of Cashmere's spending a few days in his village of Gravita and of burying Zoran there. She seemed something of a new person since the death of her husband and, far from mourning, she'd actually washed her hair and made some attempt to improve her appearance.

"I know I must no longer rely on him," she told Michael. "The children depend on *me* now."

"And the bear?"

"Ah, Vladimir. I fear I must sell him."

"Bring him along to Gravita. You might find a buyer there."

She smiled. "How can I ever repay you for your kindness?"

"A kindness to one person is often repaid by someone else."

"I have never really been kind to anyone except Katrina and Fando," she said, looking fondly at her sleeping children.

"I don't know if bears count, but you've surely been kind to Vladimir."

She laughed quietly. "Only kinder than Zoran was. I think some-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

times he would torture that bear. He often whipped him when he was training him to dance, and once before we left Turkey he shaved off a portion of his fur. Another man had come to the camp and they tormented poor Vladimir for hours. The bear howled all night, and when I told them to stop they laughed at me. In the morning Zoran had bandaged the bear's side, and he kept the bandage on until the fur had grown back."

Michael nodded through her story and said nothing. Then he stretched casually and told her he thought he'd take a look around outside.

"What are you waiting for?" she wanted to know. "Do you think someone will try to kill me, too?"

"I don't know," he answered honestly, lifting the canvas flap and dropping off the back of the wagon to the ground.

There was a full moon and he was thankful for that. Vladimir was awake, prowling restlessly at the limit of his chain, and Michael wondered if he sensed the tension in the air. He went immediately to the bear and started stroking its fur, using the light from the moon to see as best he could.

Finding what he sought was easier than he'd expected. Once he'd known about the hair growing back, the location was obvious. Now all he needed to do was—

Suddenly a shadow passed across the face of the moon. Michael started to turn, but not fast enough. The blow caught him on the side of the head.

When he opened his eyes, he was on his back and Captain Segar was bending over him. "Michael, are you all right?"

"I—what happened to me?"

"Someone knocked you out. I came running as soon as I saw it, but whoever it was got away in the darkness."

"They were after the bear," Michael said. "And now I know why."

Cashmere had appeared from the wagon. "What happened?" she asked.

"Bring a lantern over here by Vladimir," Michael told her. He went to the bear and examined the fur more closely, then asked her, "Do you have a razor in your wagon?"

"Yes."

"Bring it, please."

Within five minutes he'd completed his task, carefully shaving

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

away a patch of Vladimir's fur. Segar examined the lines and markings that had come into view and asked, "What is it?"

"A map. Zoran had it tattooed onto the bear's hide, and when the fur grew back it was hidden."

"What's it a map of?"

Michael held the lantern more closely. "It appears to be an area of the Black Sea off the coast of Turkey, just north of Istanbul."

"The boat!" Cashmere said with a sudden gasp.

"What boat?"

"Last year Zoran bought a little boat. It was full of leaks and I couldn't imagine why he wanted it. Gradually he started bringing things to our wagon—gold candlesticks and chalices, things like that. I accused him of robbing a church, but he only laughed. He carefully wrapped each item and stowed it on this boat. Then one day he took the boat a little way offshore and sank it. He would never tell me why."

"This was before he shaved the hair from Vladimir?"

"Yes, shortly before."

Michael turned to Captain Segar. "If you'll check with the Istanbul police or with Interpol, I think you'll learn of some sort of robbery in the city at that time—possibly a church, but more likely a museum of some sort. Sinking the loot in shallow water means that it could easily have been recovered by skindivers off a yacht from any country without the danger of someone having to cross the border with it."

"He could have carried a map across," Segar pointed out.

"It might have been stolen from him, or seized for some reason at Customs. The person who'd agreed to buy the map might have killed him instead of paying him—which in fact is exactly what did happen. But now the killer has the problem of getting the map off the skin of a full-grown bear."

"You believe it's someone here in the city?"

"Of course. Zoran told Cashmere he came here to dispose of the bear. He met someone in the park at four in the morning and that person killed him. The killer probably didn't believe the story of the bear at first. He was convinced Zoran had a copy of the map on him, but he didn't."

"The killer got away," Segar pointed out. "We missed our chance."

"We'll have another one. The next time we won't miss."

"When will that be?"

"At four in the morning, if you can stay up that late . . ."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Cashmere and the children were asleep when they left shortly before four. Segar had called in a militia patrol car to make certain the killer didn't use the opportunity to have another try at the bear. Then the Captain and Michael set off across the park, walking the short distance to the spot where Zoran had died.

The moon was obscured by clouds now, and the night had turned suddenly dark.

"How do you know the killer will be here at four o'clock?" Segar wanted to know.

"Because that's the time he arranged to meet Zoran. The Gypsy, after all, would have been available at any time of the night. Four in the morning must have been the most convenient time for the murderer."

As they crossed the park in the darkness, Segar advanced another theory.

"Cashmere was wearing a skirt that matched the scarf we found under the body. How did it get there, unless perhaps she killed him herself?"

Michael shook his head. "It's the most natural thing in the world for two strangers meeting for the first time—even at four in the morning—to arrange to wear some special article of clothing as identification. Zoran wore his wife's scarf. It came off in the struggle."

"Who says there was a struggle?"

"He was stabbed with his own knife, Captain. There must have been some sort of struggle."

Ahead, in the darkness, there suddenly appeared a figure, dimly illuminated by the lights from the street. "Someone's coming—" Segar was impressed. "And it's exactly four o'clock." His voice dropped to a whisper as they stepped off the path and waited in the shadows. "But why should the killer return at the same time two nights in a row?"

"Because he has to come," Michael said.

"An obsession to return to the scene of the crime?"

"No."

The man was closer now, walking quickly, and Captain Segar stepped out suddenly to confront him. Then he laughed. "For once you are wrong, Michael. This is merely Corporal Havers of the auxiliary militia, the man who found the body."

"I am right, Captain. He is the murderer."

At first Havers appeared frightened and confused. He argued, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

struggled, and finally wept. "He pulled his knife," he confessed finally. "I feared for my life."

"But you arranged to meet him because you wanted the map," Michael said.

Havers turned his startled eyes on him. "You know that, Gypsy?"

"Loot from a robbery, worth a small fortune, sunk in the shallow waters on the coast. He was selling you the secret."

"He was selling me the map. I didn't know it was tattooed onto the skin of a bear!"

"Is that what you fought about?"

"Yes. I told him to put the map on paper, I did not want a bear! He knew I had the money with me and he drew his knife. I got it away from him and in the struggle I killed him."

Later, when they were telling Cashmere that she had nothing more to fear and she was free to go, Captain Segar asked Michael how he had come to suspect Havers.

"Two things," Michael explained. "If Zoran went to meet the man at four in the morning, that had to be a convenient time for the killer. We knew Havers reached the park on his nightly patrol at that time, but there was no reason to consider him at first. Then there was the matter of the dying message, invented by Havers to shift the blame to a Gypsy. Zoran was killed by a single stab wound to the throat, and the knife was still in the wound. He may have lived a minute or so, but it's impossible that he could have spoken in that condition. You never told me it was Havers who reported the dying message, but since he was alone with the victim when he died, it could have been no one else."

"It was stupid of me not to think of that," Segar said.

Cashmere, silent until then, said, "Michael has said I may bury Zoran in his village. What about Vladimir? May he go with us?"

Segar examined the bear's skin by daylight. "Michael did a skillful job of shaving off the hair. I think we can get a good photograph of the map and send it on to the authorities in Istanbul. Vladimir will be free to go."

She turned to Michael. "You said I could bring Vladimir to your village. Did you mean it?"

"Certainly," Michael said. "So long as he doesn't dance. We are not ready for dancing bears in Gravita, but Vladimir himself will be very welcome."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The inscription (adapted from Herodotus) on the U.S. Post Office Building in New York City reads: "Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds."

Introducing a perfect mailman named Bert and his imperfect but very interesting wife, in an outstanding first by Patricia Derozier, who manages an antiquarian/out-of-print bookstore in Green Bay, Wisconsin . . .

LIVE IT UP, BERT

by PATRICIA DEROZIER

Bert prides himself on his uniform. Each piece must be ironed just so: collars pressed down correctly, pants creased with precision. When he dresses every morning at six, I feel as though I'm watching a religious ceremony.

Sometimes I lie very quietly, pretending I'm still asleep, peeking out under my eyelashes, and I think that a minister's wife must witness the same ritual on a Sunday morning. I've never caught Bert kissing his tie, but he might as well. He lays it around his neck tenderly, crossing the ends above the first and second buttons of his shirt, and then performs an intricate over, under, and through maneuver. As he slides the knot into place, I can see it in his eyes, in the self-satisfied set of his face. It's the cherry on the sundae.

Voila! In the mirror before him, Bert beholds the perfect mailman.

The dryer buzzes and I head for the basement. Best to get the clothes out immediately before the dread Wrinkle Curse sets in.

My bare foot finds something sharp on the floor and I squeal, hopping around and groping at the bottom of my foot until I find it.

A piece of dog biscuit.

Bert, the perfect mailman, has one vice, one sin against the Postal

© 1989 by Patricia Derozier.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Service. Dog biscuits. He knows all regulations forbid the feeding of dogs by postal carriers, but Bert—dare I say this?—doggedly refuses to submit to the rule. He keeps a box of dog biscuits in the cupboard and fills his pockets with a supply each day. All the dogs on his route wiggle with joy when they spot him coming, sit up and beg for their treats.

"But the green ones, Edie, the green ones are mine."

I swear it: he eats the biscuits. He started when he quit smoking. Something to keep his mouth busy, he said. Now his little ritual involves one biscuit for the dog and one for himself.

Is this a rigid man? "Only the green ones." Live it up, Bert. Let your hair down, man. Chew a red one. Suck on a yellow biscuit, Bert. Be wild and crazy.

Dr. Norman says I should continue taking the medication until I feel more like myself again.

This makes zero sense to me. How can I not feel like myself? Good, bad, or ugly, whatever I feel must be myself. If I'm not myself, then there's a real problem here to my way of thinking. At least, I assume it's my way of thinking. If I'm not myself, then perhaps I've borrowed someone else's way of thinking, which could be awkward if they should return while I'm still here.

I thought that if I pointed out the absurdity of his reasoning to Dr. Norman, it wouldn't win me any points.

So I smiled at him and took the prescription form and said, "Thank you very much."

There's a funeral parlor on Bert's route. When he was new to the route, a package was torn and leaked grey dust all through his bag and on his hands. The receptionist told him that sometimes people are cremated and their ashes shipped home for disposal.

They mail people to funeral parlors.

That's happened more than once—Uncle Fred or Gramma Aggie sliding out of their wrappers and all over Bert's hands, powdering his biscuits.

I hate dog biscuits. They get into everything. They break into pieces that scatter through the laundry, fall onto the floor. Even after they've been washed and dried, they're wicked little devils that hurt when you step on them. In a million years, alien archeologists will try to assemble pots and bowls from biscuit shards discovered in the ruins of my house . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He wore the pith helmet today.

I chewed my lip until I tasted blood-salt just to keep from laughing. The knee-length shorts, the black-nylon knee socks, they're bad enough. But then the pith helmet! Who is this, Marlin Perkins? "Jim will now attempt to carry a welfare check right up to the mail slot, folks. If you notice, he has to balance his bag while trying to avoid the loose board on the third step. Careful, Jim! Someone may have forgotten to latch the screen and I hear a very angry German shepherd heading for that door!

"While Jim goes for his mace, let's talk about life insurance—"

My very own Mr. Safari.

I can't stand him.

I'm standing in the bathroom, ready to shower, and I keep thinking about that hat. Hard white molded plastic. That can't be what real pith helmets were made of. B'wana's plastic cap? Makes b'wana sound like an aspirin bottle.

What does that feel like on your head? What does it sound like under there when it rains?

He has an old one in the back of his closet. Know your enemy.

I dig on the top shelf until I find it and then beat a hasty retreat. The closet gives me a headache—color-coordinated clothing hangs light to dark. This is obsessive behavior.

I consider it a triumph of sorts just to hang my clothes nowadays.

I made an executive decision last week. No more pills. They dry out my mouth and jello up my mind. It seems to me that the only people who feel better when I take the pills are Bert and Dr. Norman, so I'll let them continue to think I'm taking my medication and they can keep feeling good. This is called the placebo effect.

I imagined all those pills, indestructible as dog biscuits, filling up some empty spot in my body, banging around in there and maybe doing some real damage.

I mean, if this is all in my head, I should be shoving one of those capsules in my ear four times a day. That way, I wouldn't have to listen to Bert.

I put on the helmet and stare at myself in the mirror.

The cap is white and my naked body is pink-white. I look like an oversized eyedropper from another dimension. There are career pos-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sibilities here. I could work the openings of new pharmacies. A dancing eyedropper, like the dancing box of Lucky Strikes.

I bounce up and down a few times to test the effect.

Nix the dancing-eyedropper idea. My breasts get into the routine too enthusiastically, bounding all over the place like puppies. I stop jumping and after a few moments my breasts follow suit.

So much for show biz.

Clouds billow from the shower, obscuring my view.

I step into the shower, wearing the pith helmet.

"No, B'wana Missy! Not the deadly waterfall! Stay away! Much danger there! Much danger!"

"Quiet, Sabu, I know what I'm doing." I pull the curtain shut.

The noise is deafening. Water pounds on the helmet, crashing like so many rocks. I move closer to the shower head and the rock slide escalates into high-volume chaos. How can he tolerate this?

As I move backward, the banging lessens, but the sound is still maddening, echoing all over and through my head.

At the far end of the tub, I sit down and listen to the rain on my little plastic roof. If I could turn down the volume, it might almost be comforting.

I sit on the floor of the shower while the steady rain rolling off my helmet gradually goes from steamy to lukewarm and I consider my husband. Bert is a spooky man who is on the fast track to being full-blown weird. He whispers on the phone all the time and then when he talks to me I feel as though he's patting me on the head.

Think about it. He's the one who's out there distributing communion to black labs, not me. How come he's the strange one and they want me to take pills?

I watched him as he folded his pants carefully and put them on a chair, then pulled a clean pair of pajamas from the bureau drawer.

Paisley. Who invented paisley? What diabolical mind conceived of a repeat pattern of mutant commas gone berserk on a field of flannel?

"In Flannel's Field the paisleys grow,

"Mutant commas, row on row."

"What did you say?" Bert had his back to me as he pulled on his pajama bottoms.

"Nothing. I was trying to remember a poem from grade school."

What is "paisley"? Is that singular or plural? Are they like deer? If one is a paisley, what do you call a large gathering of them? A

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

herd of paisley? "Me and Little Joe are goin' over to the south forty and see how them paisley fared durin' the storm, Pa."

"What?"

I didn't realize I'd spoken aloud. "Nothing."

If they're not crazed commas, what are they? They look like paramecium, wiggling all over the cloth. No—tadpoles. Giant tadpoles with curly hair.

"Edie, what are you looking at?" There were sharp defensive edges to Bert's voice and that confused me until I realized he had misbuttoned his pajama top and had one button left over.

I smiled sweetly. "Your pajamas, honey. I was just admiring the print." I knew I was making Bert uneasy, but I couldn't pull my eyes out of that chaos. All those paisley milling around, thinking loud paisley thoughts. What are they looking for?

Lightbulb over my head! Those little devils aren't commas or tadpoles, they're sperm. A paisley is a stylized sperm disguised as an innocent albeit demented decorative device.

Consider this: women do not, repeat, do *not* wear paisley pajamas. Only men.

It sickened me to realize I was dealing with subliminal advertising of such a twisted nature. I pulled myself to the far edge of the bed so that I wouldn't touch that devious cloth even in my sleep.

I can't help but wonder if he's done something to the dogs on his route to make them all so gentle and tractable. Maybe it's not that he prefers the green biscuits. Maybe they're the only safe ones.

Rain is therapeutic, much better than drugs. Rain on the roof soothes, blocks out distractions.

I don't like the way Bert looks in his uniform from the rear. He gives new dimension to the term "pompous ass."

I overheard him on the phone. Lots of mumbling, a little pause, then "Female stuff. Half of it's in the head, anyway."

In my head? That's a laugh. I'm neither a blind nor a stupid woman. His little plan is obvious to me. He'd like to feed me pills until I'm as complacent as one of his dogs. Then he can manipulate my mind with clever tricks like the paisley pajamas. It's getting so that the only place I can feel halfway safe is in the shower.

Bert's crazy and he thinks he can drag me down with him.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hell, no! I won't go!

Hell, no! I won't go!

I find it amazing that I need forms and signatures and identification to claim my medicine from the pharmacy, yet I can walk right into a giant store like Hardware Acres and purchase all sorts of strange and wonderful chemicals and nobody even glances at me.

I made a very bad mistake tonight. I forgot to lock the door when I took my shower. I didn't hear him come in—the rain on my roof drowns out most other noises—and all of a sudden the shower curtains were flung back and there he stood, staring down at me with big circle eyes.

Those curtains sailing around made a bad draft and I drew my knees up closer to my chest for warmth. I tried to stare back up at him, but it's not easy to cock your head and look up at such an angle with the rain beating down.

He tried to take my helmet and I bit him. I could see the tiny beads of blood starting when he pulled his hand away.

"Seventy-two hours," Dr. Norman said. "Seventy-two hours is all we can keep her unless she agrees to stay longer."

Oh, Doc, I thought. Just let me keep my lovely white roof and I'll stay as long as necessary. I didn't treat all of the green biscuits, so I can't be sure just when it will happen. Until then, I'd be happy to stay with you. I hope you have nice showers.

I believe that if something should happen to Bert while I'm away, I'll have him cremated.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Brad realized he was puffing furiously on his cigar and then he realized something else: it wasn't the million dollars or Chapter 11 that was agitating him the most—it was the idea of Josh Pembroke taking the securities and absconding . . .

A GRAVE MISTAKE

by REYNOLDS PHILLIPS

A week after Joshua Pembroke, long-time lead bookkeeper for Warburton Seafoods, Inc., vanished, nearly a million dollars' worth of company-owned negotiable securities turned up missing, too.

Owner Brad Warburton got the word from Charlie Markham, his vice president of finance. They stood in Warburton's unpretentious office overlooking the loading dock, where a big semi was taking on cartons of canned crab and smoked salmon for their 1,200-mile journey to the gourmet markets of L.A. A hint of dead fish tinged the breeze drifting through the late-afternoon September haze.

"I got to the bank and opened the safe-deposit box—they were just plain gone," said Markham, a cherub-faced man whose baby fat had remained with him through more than four decades. His voice went from apologetic to desperate. "What the hell are we gonna do, Brad? We sure can't pay off the new plant out of cash flow."

"No," said Warburton, still too shaken to think much. The plan had been to cash in the securities and pay the contractors. Now he'd have to call and tell them to stop work on the plant. But that wouldn't pay for the work they'd already done. They'd be after him real quick for that.

Of course, there was always Chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Law, which would allow him to hold off his creditors while he tried to work something out—

He realized he was puffing furiously on his cigar and then he realized something else: it wasn't the million dollars or Chapter 11 that was agitating him the most—it was the idea of Josh Pembroke taking the securities and absconding.

© 1989 by Reynolds Phillips.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He yanked the cigar from his mouth and shook his white-thatched head vehemently. "No!" he exploded. "Damn it, Charlie, I don't care how it looks—old Josh *couldn't* have done it!" He finished with a downward slash of his hand, like a cleaver separating a mutton chop. He was a sizable man just over six feet, just over two hundred pounds, and almost as trim as when he'd been an All-Coast second-team tackle back before World War II.

Despite the fact that those gridiron glories were half a century behind him, it never occurred to Warburton to think of himself as old. Joshua Pembroke was old. But old Josh—wrinkled, arthritic, and suffering from a severe heart condition known only to himself and Warburton—was four years Warburton's junior. And old Josh (Joshua Pembroke III, actually), just as much pioneer stock as Warburton himself, could never be guilty of embezzlement.

"No," Warburton said again, quietly this time, "I trust the people in this company, Charlie. Especially guys like you and Josh. Hell, your ancestors and Josh's and mine *built* this territory."

He fell silent, thinking, as he so often did, of a graveyard swallowed by the forest. His grandparents were there, and Josh's. And Charlie Markham's great-grandparents. Farmers from Kansas, they had arrived out here more than a century ago and, with nothing but determination and their bare hands, had molded a misty wilderness into a community.

"You know," Warburton went on, "Josh may not have your ambition and your smarts, Charlie, but he's been faithful and he's never complained—not even when I promoted you over him and made you a V.P."

"Yes," agreed Markham, "I've been driving him to work about six months and he's never once made a snide remark."

But Charlie Markham hadn't driven Josh to work for a week now, not since he'd reported him missing one morning. And the Johns Harbor County sheriff and the police of Washington and Oregon hadn't found a trace of Josh. As Warburton phoned the sheriff's office to report the theft, he supposed they would find no trace of the securities, either.

In the morning, over coffee and oatmeal, Nita studied him. Ordinarily, at this eight o'clock routine, Warburton would be sitting there thinking how lucky he was to have her, how patient she'd been to put up with the isolation of tiny Oyster Cove all these years, and how remarkable it was that scarcely a line marred the smoothness

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of her splendid face despite the white hair surrounding it. But today his thoughts were elsewhere, and she read them well.

"I know you're upset, Brad, but I hope not so upset you've forgotten what you've got to do today."

"Go into Port City and meet Tony's bus." Warburton stared into his half empty cereal bowl as though he were reading tea leaves. "He couldn't have come at a worse time." Until yesterday, in spite of Josh's disappearance, he had looked forward to their seventeen-year-old grandson's first visit in four years.

"We may not see him again before he's a grown man," Nita said. "We can't neglect him, Brad."

Warburton nodded sober agreement. Sometimes he felt he'd neglected their only son, Tony's father, and that's why Pete had walked away from Oyster Cove and wound up as an investment banker on Wall Street. Now Tony, raised on Long Island, had been accepted by Harvard, aiming at business school and an MBA. "You think I want to see him grow into a second-generation yuppie? I'm going to do all I can to make him realize his roots are out here, not in New York. I'm going to walk him to Graveyard Hill and—"

"I thought you'd decided you were never going there again."

"Yes, I know. But that was before I knew Tony was coming. I've got to show him how to get there, Nita. I think every generation of Warburtons should know that place and go there once in a while—"

"Besides," Nita finished for him, "you hope he'll become so fascinated with his pioneer heritage he'll think about coming back out here with that Harvard degree and taking over the business."

Port City, the county seat, was thirty miles from Oyster Cove. Brad timed his arrival there for ten o'clock, just as the bank opened. That left nearly an hour until Tony's bus was due in from Seattle.

In the bank, he went directly to the safe-deposit counter. The young brunette stationed there was a new face to him and, since he was a new one to her, he had to go to the bank manager to get what he wanted. What he wanted was a look at the entry slips for the past two weeks.

He quickly found the one signed yesterday by Charlie Markham when he'd come to pick up the securities. Nick Scarletti, his vice president of operations, had been here a few days earlier. Finally Brad discovered one bearing Josh Pembroke's signature, dated the day Josh disappeared.

The signature looked authentic enough—obviously the bank clerk

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had checked it against the signed card on file. But there was no way, she said, that she could remember what the signer looked like. "I'm new here," she reminded him.

His mind churning with what he had just learned, Warburton drove through misty rain to the bus station. He found Tony sitting in the lobby, reading a copy of *Forbes*. In four years, Tony had grown from a scrawny kid into a tall, broad-shouldered, darkly handsome young man. He got a lot of those looks from Nita, thought Brad.

He drove his grandson directly to the Oyster Cove plant, getting reacquainted on the way. As they reached the head of the stairs to Warburton's office, they were intercepted by Charlie Markham and Nick Scarletti.

Nick was built like a cedar stump, with fierce dark eyes and a drooping moustache. Unlike those of Warburton and Markham, his ancestors were buried somewhere in the old country. He was a good operations man, but Warburton had suspected for some time that Nick was squirreling away his money with the idea of going somewhere and starting a seafood-processing business of his own.

"Charlie and I have been talking," Scarletti said. "Charlie says there's been no real in-depth search of Josh's house. We think there might be something there that'd give us a clue to what happened."

Warburton thought about it. "Okay. There's no time like the present. Let's do it now."

Joshua Pembroke lived alone in a little grey house he had inherited from his folks. He had never bothered to lock the doors. That was how Markham had managed to walk in and find him gone.

They went through cupboards and drawers and closets. Scarletti prowled a beat-up rolltop desk and suddenly said, "Hey, look at this!" He spread out his find on top of the desk: two slick color brochures on the wonders of Brazil and an airline schedule of flights to South America.

"I'll be damned," Markham said quietly. "I'd almost forgotten. I didn't pay much attention to it at the time—I guess I thought Josh was just whistling in the wind."

Brad gave him a sharp look. "What are you telling us, Charlie?"

"Well, a few days before he disappeared—we were driving to work—he got talking about travel, about how he'd spent his whole life around here and now he didn't have a lot of years left. He mentioned Brazil as one place he'd always wanted to see—the Amazon, Rio. But like I said, I thought he was just daydreaming."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Warburton bit down hard on his cigar and kept his mouth shut. His long-established belief system had just sustained another rude shock.

That evening, over drinks with Nita and Tony, he told Nita of the day's two discoveries. "I have to admit everything points right at old Josh," he finished. "It's the kind of evidence that'll impress everyone but me."

Nita looked at their grandson, who sat on the slipcovered sofa with a glass of Sprite in his hand. "Tony, your grandfather is the most naive man on the West Coast. One of his employees could walk up and stick a knife in his ribs and he'd swear some stranger off the streets threw it at him."

Warburton said, "Damn it, Nita, you know Josh as well as I do. Do you really think he'd take a million-dollar bite out of the hand that fed him?"

"Maybe not. But if he *is* guilty, at least he's getting to see the world. Brazil? I'm lucky to get to Seattle once a year."

"I took you to Frisco the year before last."

"Yes—for a fishmongers' convention."

Warburton winced. For months, fingers of guilt had been scraping at him, reminding him it wasn't fair to keep his wife isolated in this small, remote community, but until now he hadn't realized she was bitter about it. Sipping his bourbon, he made himself a pledge: regardless of what happened to the company, he would treat her to a trip. Soon.

In the morning, the sun was shining for a change. It would be a good day to put aside his problems and take Tony to see where his roots were buried.

In a straight line, Graveyard Hill was just a few miles from Oyster Cove. But that way was all timber and gulleys and ridges, without even a trail. By car it was forty-five miles, the last two along a long-abandoned logging road that no car ever took. They took the first forty-three in Warburton's elderly Dodge pickup. He reminisced for his grandson, describing how the Warburtons and Pembrokes and Markhams had come out from Kansas in 1882 and found their way to this green but uninhabited land, carved out homesteads deep in the forest, logged with teams of oxen, and cleared the small area on top of a wooded hill overlooking the river for a burial ground.

"A funeral procession was a procession of rowboats, the only way

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they could get to the place. There wasn't a house within miles of it, just like now. But when the tide was in, they could follow a slough right to the base of the hill."

Thanks to a now-defunct logging company, it was easier to reach the graveyard on foot today. They walked briskly along the abandoned ruts of the one-time logging road. Branches of Douglas fir and cedar and hemlock intertwined overhead, shutting out the sun, turning the old track into a long green tunnel.

Then, abruptly, Warburton left the tunnel, plunging through thick underbrush up a long rise. At the top, sunlight beamed down into a small clearing surrounded by great trees.

"This is it?" There was awe in Tony's voice. "Wow, this place really *is* lost, isn't it?"

"Only a handful of people know it exists," Warburton said. He walked into the clearing. When he had first come here, much younger than Tony, a pole fence had encompassed the cemetery. The fence had long since crumbled and the forest had closed in around the place protectively.

"There." Warburton pointed to a small rectangular block of granite on a bare patch of ground just ahead of them. "Your great-great-grandfather, Tony."

The name, after all these years, was still clear:

DANIEL WARBURTON
1841–1911

Warburton felt, as always on his rare visits here, an upwelling of sadness. These people deserved to be remembered, yet their resting place was so utterly removed from the world of the living.

But even as he thought this, he sensed that something was wrong here. Something, some little thing, had changed.

It took him a full minute. Then he knew. He stood staring at the spot where another small gravestone had always been, no more than ten feet to the left of his grandfather's marker. It was gone. He looked around. It was nowhere in sight.

"What's the matter, Gramps?"

"Someone's walked off with Joshua Pembroke's headstone."

"Joshua—" Tony frowned. "I thought he was the guy who just turned up missing."

"That's Joshua III. And now his grandfather's stone is missing. The first Joshua Pembroke, your great-great grandpa's buddy."

As Warburton spoke, his eyes continued to search the graveyard—the blackberry vines and tall grasses and low brush, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thrusting up among them the dozen tombstones, large and small, he knew so well. Then, off near the corner of the clearing where cedar grave-markers had long since turned to dust, he saw a marker made of stone. A marker that didn't belong there.

He walked over to it. It read:

JOSHUA PEMBROKE

There were no dates on it. For whatever reason, there never had been. And there were no weeds or grass around this old marker in its new location—just earth. And the earth looked as though it had been patted down, then maybe roughed up with a cedar bough or something. Warburton stared at the small tombstone, then turned to Tony.

"There's a shovel back in the pickup," he said.

Less than an hour later, he took the shovel from Tony and began digging. He inserted the blade in the ground tentatively, almost fearfully. The earth was moist and soft—it had been turned recently. He started just inches from the headstone and worked his way back, probing with the shovel, afraid of what he might hit if he thrust the blade hard into the soil.

Not more than six inches beneath the surface, the shovel met something that made a clacking sound. A rock? Brad scooped the earth from around it. It wasn't a rock, it was a wristwatch. Attached to a wrist.

Moments later, blood pounding in his ears, he stared down into the dirt-covered face of Joshua Pembroke III.

He looked at Tony and said inanely, brokenly, "He's a long way from Brazil."

The next twenty-four hours were a nightmare of shocked disbelief in the village of Oyster Cove and the processing plant of Warburton Seafoods. Joshua's disappearance had been accepted with a fair degree of equanimity. After all, he wasn't the first person who had ever thought of grabbing a windfall and scampering off to paradise—and acted on it. But what had actually happened was totally baffling. The most logical explanation seemed to be the one Nick Scarletti propounded:

"I guess Josh *did* take the stuff. And somebody found out about it, did him in, and buried him where he shouldn't ever have been found. That somebody has your securities, Brad."

Warburton took a call from Sheriff Soderland, an old friend.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Brad, we've got a little information for you. Why don't you come up to Port City this afternoon and drop in on Doc Carruthers? He'll be at his county office."

"Thanks," said Warburton. "And if the doc doesn't mind, I might like to bring a couple of guys with me."

Johns Harbor County wasn't populous enough, nor sophisticated enough, to have a full-time medical examiner. Serving as county coroner was merely a part-time activity for Dr. Leighton Carruthers (Family Practice—Evening Appointments Available). He was waiting for Brad in his official headquarters, a cubbyhole in the courthouse annex.

Warburton, a reluctant Scarletti, and a curious Charlie Markham squeezed into the office, found chairs, and sat for a silent minute as Carruthers studied them. He was a small man with penetrating dark eyes and a moustache that seemed to have been put on with an eyebrow pencil.

"The best I can determine from the autopsy," he began, "is that Mr. Pembroke had been dead for at least a week."

"Since the day I discovered he was missing," said Markham.

Carruthers nodded. "We found one other item of interest."

Warburton leaned forward, his flimsy chair shrieking a protest.

Carruthers cleared his throat. "Mr. Pembroke was not murdered. He died of myocardial infarction—a massive heart attack, gentlemen."

When they left the coroner and walked outside into another misty afternoon, Scarletti was repeating what in essence both he and Markham had said inside: "I don't get it—he dies and somebody gives him a free burial and even finds an old tombstone with his name on it. It doesn't make sense, Brad."

"I suppose not," said Warburton. "But right now, as long as I'm in town, I'm going to walk over to the travel agency and pick up some cruise literature for Nita."

"We'll wait in your truck," Markham said.

Warburton gave him a half smile. "The hell you will. Both you guys need the exercise—come on. That's an order."

Port City wasn't large. It had only one competent travel agency, Ports of Call, located just a block down the street. When they got there, Warburton herded his companions through the door ahead of him.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A young woman with shoulder-length red hair and blue eyes came to the counter to meet them. Her smile compensated for the gloomy day outside. As she produced and explained half a dozen brochures on transcanal cruises to the Caribbean to Brad, Scarletti riffled through travel magazines on a coffee table and Markham studied some of the world's great scenes on posters along the wall, his back to the counter.

Gathering up the brochures, Warburton thanked the girl and winked. "By the way," he said to her, "I understand you gave a friend of mine some material on Brazil the other day. Would you recognize him if you saw him?"

She recognized a joke when she saw one. "Why, yes, I think so."

She smiled at Charlie Markham—who sidled toward the front door like a crab moving away from a scoop net. Warburton took two strides and grabbed his arm. Markham spun and broke free. He continued for the door, moving fast this time.

But Warburton was faster. Launching himself in a flying tackle, his arms locked around Markham's thighs and the two of them crashed to the floor. Warburton had the extraneous thought that this was the first tackle he'd made since the Washington State game in 1941.

He raised his head and said, "How about somebody calling the cops?"

That evening, cigar in one hand and double bourbon in the other, he explained to Nita and Tony how it was that he had actually come to acknowledge the infidelity of one of his closest associates.

"Charlie knew Josh's signature well enough to be able to fake it at the bank," he said. "But Charlie didn't know that Josh had heart trouble so bad he didn't dare fly—only Josh and I and his doctor knew that. So Josh never would have talked to Charlie about flying down to Rio.

"When you and I turned up Josh's body, Tony, I knew nobody could have lugged him that two miles up to Graveyard Hill. But Charlie knew the history of that place like nobody but Josh and me—he knew you could take a boat in close at high tide."

"So much for honor among the sons of the pioneers," said Nita.

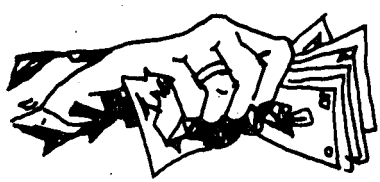
Warburton grimaced and waved his cigar at her. "Now lookit here, Nita. I knew Charlie could never have killed anybody. I *knew* that. That's what stumped me until it turned out that Josh had died of natural causes. Then I knew what happened. Charlie had just

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

walked in and found his body and decided to take advantage of it. That's not murder, Nita. And, besides, Charlie didn't just dump him over a cliff somewhere. He buried him right up with his ancestors. Charlie's a sentimental guy. He took the extra effort to move that headstone so old Josh would have a grave with his name on it."

"Which he wouldn't have done if he hadn't believed you when you were telling everyone you were never going to Graveyard Hill again." Nita took a sip of her Bristol Cream and smiled at him across the rim of her glass.

"Well, maybe not. But any way you look at it, Charlie isn't really that bad." He halted in midsentence, aware that Nita and Tony were exchanging grins. "Forget it," he growled, and drove his teeth halfway through the butt of his cigar.



DETECTIVERSE

DYING TO WIN

by WILLIAM F. SMITH

A born-to-lose gambler named Biff
In frustration drove off a steep cliff,
But no sooner 'twas done
Than his Lotto card won—
You could call him a real lucky stiff.

© 1989 by William F. Smith.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

WILLIAM BANKIER

Ted Casey could be a flake. He was honest and sincere and considerate, but he could get on his motorcycle and be halfway home to the valley before he remembered his guitar and have to come back to the hotel, where he worked the 7:00-to-3:00 shift, for it. Forgetting to drop his receipts into the safe was par for the course.

Miller hefted the envelope—it felt like a sandwich in his hand. The amount scrawled on the front of it was $486.32. The thing to do was take it to the safe and make the drop, then tease hell out of Casey tonight at Silver's Cabin . . .

THE DROP

by WILLIAM BANKIER

Moe Miller counted the cash drawer. He confirmed there was $100.00 in the metal box. Ted Casey was packing his guitar in its leather bag, having completed his eight-hour shift behind the desk. Miller would now be in charge at the Bell Hotel until eleven o'clock. "Anything I need to know?" he asked, scanning the board where the name of each guest was lettered on a white card.

"Reservations are all in. You should have a quiet shift." Casey slung the instrument across his back. He had corn-silk hair and good teeth showing through a shy grin. "Put your feet up," he said, "and take the money."

"See you at Silver's tonight," Moe said. Thinking about having a drink with Ted would ease him through the long hours. Ted was the nearest thing to a buddy Moe could point to in Metrola. Not that there had been a lot of them back in Laceville. He used to teach his high-school classes and he coached the basketball team at the Y, but

© 1989 by William Bankier.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he was pals with nobody. His young brother Jerry's farewell speech had been confirmation of that fact.

"Moe, I'm the only person you can turn to. I've paid back the money. They aren't going to prosecute. But you can't work in town any longer. Here's bus fare."

That was twelve years ago, when Miller was thirty. At first he had kept in touch with Jerry from various locations. Then he gave up writing or calling. There had been zero communication in the last decade.

The desk became busy. Miller passed out a few keys and took some back. He checked in an Australian couple, wrote their receipt, put the money in the drawer. Mr. Capollini had a good thing going with his little hotel in a nice area of Metrola. Old building, low rates, always nearly full. Only two maids, one man on the desk in eight-hour shifts. No meals, no bar, no hassle.

There was a white envelope fallen in the back of the drawer behind the metal cashbox. Miller fished it out, fat as a purse. He saw the numbers scribbled on it and knew what it was. This was Ted Casey's "drop." Each clerk totaled his receipts near the end of shift, put the money in an envelope, sealed it, wrote on it the amount, the date, and the time, and placed the envelope in a cylindrical metal compartment on top of the floor safe. Then the clerk turned a handle and the envelope "dropped" into the strongbox below. The owner spun the combination to retrieve the envelopes every day or so. The procedure had been demonstrated to Miller several months ago when the younger Casey was giving him his on-the-job training.

Casey could be a flake. He was honest and sincere and considerate, but he could get on his motorcycle and be halfway home to the valley before he remembered his guitar and had to come back for it. This oversight was par for the course. Miller hefted the envelope—it felt like a sandwich in his hand. The amount scrawled on the front of it was $486.32. The thing to do was take it to the safe and make the drop, then tease hell out of Casey tonight at Silver's Cabin.

But this was not the only thing to do. Moe put the envelope back in the drawer behind the cashbox. Just as if he'd never seen it. He eased the door shut—although there was nobody in the tiny lobby to hear. Once you dropped an envelope, it couldn't be taken back. Think about it, he told himself. Consider the alternative.

Leaving the rooming house earlier that afternoon, Moe had run into his landlady. Actually, Iris Damfallon had been lying in wait

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with her door open at the foot of the stairs. Fleeing past, he caught a glimpse of daubed canvases, not all in frames. He also smelled garlic frying with onions and olive oil and heard the sensuous voice.

"Morris, we have to talk." She was the only one since his mother back in Laceville to use his proper name.

He did an exaggerated turn and hung his face back into the doorway. "I realize I owe three weeks."

"Not about the rent—about food. You've been starving yourself. Look at those hollow cheeks, those sad eyes. You're becoming a Kohlwitz charcoal."

"I just had a tin of soup. But thanks. I'm due at the hotel."

In red-corduroy shorts and a man's shirt with the tails knotted around her waist, Iris flexed bare toes against the carpet. Her legs had once been good but they were not any more, and Miller could not forgive her for constantly showing them to him. A thin brown cigarette remained steady between her teeth as she said, "I made a monster sale to a gallery yesterday. Seven like this one." She spun a canvas and stood behind it. On a side table, there were two wineglasses beside an ominous bottle. "I'm celebrating."

"I wish I could stay."

Now safe behind the desk at the Bell Hotel, Miller realized he couldn't go on spurning Iris Damfallon forever. At $85.00 a week, he was on her books for $255.00. But here was an envelope with over four hundred dollars in it. He could pay his arrears, add one week in advance, and still have cash in his pocket. He needed this money.

It was nothing like the bank. The bank was Miller's second job in Metrola, after his career at the brewery. Tellers were always in demand because burnout was a fact of teller life. He had the appearance, the skill with numbers. He took the training. He began work and was doing all right, but the stress was heavy—you had to hit a balance after handling tens of thousands of dollars of other people's money.

Then his old friend Walt from the brewery happened to come in and spotted Miller behind the window. He came back three days later and bought Moe a drink after closing. The plan was simple. A complete stranger to Miller, a friend of Walt's would come in with a check for $1,200. The check was on somebody else's account, but Miller would cash it without bothering to verify the man's ID. Later Walt would meet him and pay him his share—$500.00. It was done. A day later another stranger did the same routine, and Miller was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

given another five hundred. It was understood he would be confronted by his supervisor and he would be suspended. In this case, he was terminated. His "mistakes" were looked on as very lazy teller work. But despite some suspicion, there was nothing to connect him with the people who passed the fraudulent paper. And he wanted out of the job, anyway. He could never work in another bank—but he could accept $5.00 an hour at the Bell Hotel.

The bank scam was Walt's idea and it hurt no individual in particular. Pocketing Casey's drop was something else. Would Casey be fired? Probably not—he had been on staff for years and Capollini liked him. It pleased the old man to have this kid from Ohio practicing his guitar in the back office, pretending that someday he'd make it in the jazz clubs.

According to the worst scenario, the boss would take it out of Casey's salary, so much a week. It was almost like Ted lending him the money, which he might do if Miller were to ask him. But Miller would never be reduced to asking.

A wooden shingle—nothing so crass as a neon sign—identified the building as Silver's Cabin. Miller heard music while he paid the taxi. The trio, the one Ted Casey wanted to join, was playing a version of "Satin Doll" that walked confidently through the night. Past the shrubbery, beyond the lanterns on the porch, silhouettes were head to head at every table. Behind the bar, one small blue light announced Moe's favorite beer.

The name reminded him of working on the bottling line during that carefree summer when he was new in the city. The brewery gave every worker a free bottle at the end of shift. Not everybody wanted it, so Moe and Walt would go around and gather a lot of free ones, then sit on the grass in the shade with their backs against the warehouse wall and get quietly smashed for a couple of hours.

Miller found Ted Casey at the end of the bar. Silver Gold was a few feet away at her cash register, ringing tabs and making change. Moe bought Ted a drink and himself a double and began catching up. "What happened?" Casey asked.

"What do you mean?"

"You look spooked."

"I'm all right. I'm tired." He knocked back his drink and signaled for another. "Eight hours behind that desk. I'm crippled."

Last month, Miller had asked Silver for a job as bartender. More money, less boredom. She had turned him down with the clarity of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

expression that was her hallmark. "Never. Moe Miller is a drunk. One of the nicer ones, but a drunk all the same. You could never serve. But you're welcome in here any time. You don't even have to spend money."

Now he broke another twenty. Silver took it and said, "Did you rob a bank?"

"Not this week." His laugh surprised her.

Ted Casey's attention was attracted from the music onstage to the transaction beside him. "Nice to be rich."

"I had the winner in the seventh race," Miller said.

"I never knew you played the horses."

"Hardly ever do."

The owner of the club had money and beauty and silver hair. The property had been in her family for generations, dating from when this part of Metrola was residential. After her parents died, she turned most of the rooms into the club, acquiring her license through her father's old friend, the Mayor. The small building on the back lawn, formerly the servants' quarters, became her dwelling. That was Silver's cabin. But the name had shifted and taken over the whole place.

She observed Miller on his stool, regaining his balance after an elbow slipped off the bar. Some customers were leaving. Silver said, "Ted, take our friend to one of those armchairs."

"I'm okay," Miller grumbled, but he allowed himself to be guided to a chair.

"Man, you are in a weird mood," Casey said. Then, when next Miller saw him, Casey was onstage, taking a guitar solo on his own composition, "Blues for Nobody's Girl." It was a good song but, as he tried to keep from going unconscious, Miller couldn't help noticing that the trio played it a lot better than Casey did.

Miller slept till noon. One beer with breakfast alleviated his hangover. His hands hardly trembled as he picked up Casey's drop from the dresser. Dumping the remaining bills and the few coins on the bed, he tore the envelope into confetti and flushed it down the toilet. Then he counted out $340.00, slipped that amount into his shirt pocket, and put the rest in his wallet.

At the foot of the stairs, Iris Damfallon's door was closed. He knocked boldly. When she opened the door a crack, it gave him pleasure to flick out the bills and thrust them through the aperture.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Here we go," he said in a breezy tone. "The three weeks I owe you and next week as well."

"My goodness." She took the money.

"A project worked out," he told her, and he hit the street. Talk about a narrow escape. What would he do if he began owing her again? Casey's drop was a one-time lucky break. The landlady was trying to ease him off her list of tenants and into her life. If he ever fell in with her, he knew he would die. He would end up killing himself. Or her. Or them both.

Mr. Capollini was in the back office when he arrived to take over just before three o'clock. He plucked a roll of mints from his pocket and popped one to mask the recent beer. Casey was standing in the office doorway, his hands flat in his back pockets, a tortured expression on his face.

"Guess what I did?" he said. "I didn't make my drop yesterday. It's lost."

"How much?"

"Over four hundred."

The owner came out, looking embarrassed. "You say it was in the drawer. Did you see it, Moe?"

Miller said no, he didn't. The drawer was now open. He bent to it, lifting the cashbox, looking behind it. Casey watched him.

Mr. Capollini was a slow, moderate, methodical man. He sat down in the big swivel-chair facing the window where guests looked in for their keys and mail. The spring squeaked as he rocked slowly, his shiny boots brushing a worn patch in the carpet.

"These are the possibilities," he said. His fingers formed a steeple under his lower lip. "Ted, you never made up the envelope. You put the money in your pocket."

Casey turned aside.

"I'm not accusing you. I'm listing possibilities. Here's another one. You found it when you came in, Moe. And kept it."

"Or I never saw it," Miller said. "And Jimmy took it when he came in for the night shift."

"I'll speak to Jimmy. Any others?"

Miller said, "We're not always behind here, are we, Ted? We can be upstairs showing a room, or in the john for a few minutes. The maid sometimes wanders in here to get the checkout list."

"I'll have a word with Renata and Marie." Capollini heaved himself out of the chair. His white hair gleamed. He smelled of lilac water. "I have no intention of calling in the police. But I don't intend

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to eat the loss. So—" he sighed "—I'll deduct fifty a week from your salary, Ted, until the amount is made up. Can you live with that?"

"Just barely," Casey said. "But it's my fault. I should have dropped the envelope."

When the owner was gone, Moe counted the drawer. The requisite $100.00 was there. He turned to his colleague. "Anything I need to know?"

"You were strange last night at Silver's."

"I got so bombed, I don't remember."

"We talked about it." Casey's eyes were searching Miller's face. "Moe, did you take the envelope? I think you did."

"I didn't."

"If you did, I can understand. We all need money. It's a temptation. If it happened to me, somebody else's drop, I might be tempted."

"But you wouldn't take it. You'd drop it in the safe. So would I if I saw your envelope. But I didn't see it."

"Just tell me, so I don't go bothering other people."

"I've told you."

"I'm going to have to face Jimmy and ask him. And Renata and Marie. I hate that." Especially Marie, Moe thought. Ted had been working up the courage to ask her out.

Casey went through the doorway and reappeared at the window. He leaned in. "One last time, Moe. Let me get clear of this so I can look at the world straight. Tell me if you took it."

"I didn't take it," Miller said.

Three weeks passed. Ted Casey never referred to the lost money again. He also stopped bringing his guitar to the hotel. He was no longer practicing while on duty. Change of shift between himself and Moe was quicker now. Ted left notes on scraps of paper and walked as soon as the drawer was counted.

Moe spent the rest of the stolen money and was once again behind on his rent. Iris invited him in for roast beef. It smelled great but he refused, saying he was expected at a friend's house. Then he felt impelled to tell her, "I've got more money coming in. When it arrives, I'll catch up again and pay you another week in advance."

One evening just after ten o'clock, when he was beginning to count down the minutes until end of shift, broad shoulders in a blue sweater filled the window and a handsome face looked in. "Found you!" his younger brother said.

"Jerry! Where did you come from?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Thought you could ditch me? I paid a detective for three days' work. That's the time it took for him to track you down."

Jerry's business, a mail-order company, was doing so well he had money to spend. It seemed like a good idea to trace the big brother who had stopped writing letters. When the detective agency came up with an address, he got excited. He climbed aboard an airplane, then rented a car upon arrival. Before driving to the Bell Hotel, he had checked himself into a motel on Metrola's outskirts.

"This is great," Jerry said, settling into the spare chair behind the desk, taking notice of everything—the ledger cards and files and the PBX. His brother had just fielded a telephone call from somebody requesting information on rates. "Very professional. You look good and sound good."

"You must be kidding. I'm getting five bucks an hour."

"Never mind. You're in a straight job. I'm proud of you, Moe."

Just before the shift ended at eleven o'clock, Ted Casey came by the hotel to talk to Marie about something and Moe introduced him to Jerry. The brothers were laughing about double-dating in high school. It was a Sadie Hawkins Dance in the gym, both of them invited by girls in the senior class. Neither was experienced in dancing or anything else. The crunch came when the girls brought them home in a taxi, saw them to the door, and there were four nervous people crowded into the tiny front porch. There was frosty breath and some hesitation and then cold kisses that missed but left the brothers with a feeling of triumph.

Casey caught the happy mood. He loosened up with Moe for the first time since the missing drop. "How long are you in town?" he asked Jerry.

"Nothing definite. Maybe a week."

"Moe, why don't you bring your brother around to Silver's tonight?" Ted suggested. "I'll be there."

In the rented car, Miller let Jerry win the argument over who was treating who. They drove to the motel first so Jerry could change. While Jerry was knotting his tie in front of the mirror, Moe glanced into a suitcase open on the bed and noticed the barrel of an automatic pistol.

"You're carrying a gun."

"Never travel without it. Especially not to Metrola. Any idea the thugs out there?"

"My little brother is armed and dangerous."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Not sure about the second part."

The knot in the tie was a perfect half-windsor with a dimple centered under the knot. The shirt was tailored—it fit Jerry equally as well over the broad shoulders as at the trim waist. Moe felt thin and sloppy in the clothes he'd been working in all day. He said, "Remember you used to loosen your tie and leave it under the collar when you took off your shirt?"

Jerry said, "I also would leave the shirt inside my jacket. Saved a lot of minutes getting dressed."

"What did you do with all those minutes you saved? You don't have to tell me. You got rich."

"I'm not rich, Moe. It's like Daffy Duck said in the cartoon when he discovered the cave full of jewels. I'm comfortably well off." Jerry turned from the mirror and flashed his bandbox smile. "Let's go. I want to buy my brother a dirty big meal."

They had a late supper at Metrola's best seafood restaurant, getting through two bottles of white wine. Silver's Cabin was within walking distance. When they arrived, the bar had emptied out following the peak crush. Ted Casey hadn't yet arrived.

"Cheers." Jerry brought his glass close to Moe's glass without touching. "I like your life in this town."

"I'm in a dead end."

"You've got friends. This Casey. The owner of this place." Silver had spent a few minutes getting to know Moe's brother before vanishing into her office. "The ground is prepared. You only have to dig in and something good will happen."

"That's your luck, Jerry, not mine. Something may happen, but it won't be good."

When Ted Casey showed up, the brothers had shifted to a table near the doorway leading to the garden. Casey said, "You guys are laughing again."

"It's an old debate," Moe said. "When a hockey player gets a breakaway, who has the advantage—the goalie or the guy with the puck? Silver, we need a round."

Silver brought the waiter with her and took a seat at the table. After watching the brothers and listening to them for a while, she said to Casey, "Moe is totally different with Jerry, have you noticed?"

"He's subservient," Casey said. His benign mood from earlier in the evening had turned sour.

"You're too sober to express an opinion," Jerry said.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Ted's nursing a grudge," Moe told him. Then wished he had kept quiet.

"Let's try to maintain the mood," Silver said.

Jerry raised his glass. "Here's to my big brother. He's turned his life around. Moe is living proof that you can make a mistake but it doesn't have to bring you down."

"Jerry, cut it out."

"If I wasn't drunk I wouldn't tell you this, but years ago, in Laceville, this guy was the best basketball coach the YMCA ever had. He was also a great teacher of English at Laceville High. But he did a dumb thing."

"This is not the time, Jerry."

"He took some money. One of the kids left a wallet lying around the dressing room. A rich kid."

"I'm asking you to shut up."

"Moe needed the money, so he took it. Somebody saw him and that was that. Out of his job. Had to leave town."

Silver got up. "I'm needed at the cash." She went away.

"The point," Jerry concluded, "is not that my brother did wrong but that he has rehabilitated himself. You have to respect a man for that." He got to his feet, steadying himself against two chairs. "I'm off to the men's."

When he was gone, Casey turned on Moe. "You bastard—you did steal my drop. Admit it. This is a pattern. If you see money lying around loose, you take it."

"All right, I did. I was in trouble. I owed three weeks' rent."

"You aren't the only one with problems. Capollini is taking fifty bucks a week off me. You can damn well pay me back."

"I don't have it."

"Then get it. Get it from your brother."

"I can't ask him."

"Do it. Or I'm calling in the cops."

In the car, driving away from the parking lot, Jerry said, "You're very quiet."

"I'm trying to keep from taking your head off."

"What's wrong?"

"You shamed me in front of my friends."

"The bit about the money? I was praising you."

"I can't tell whether you're devious or just plain dumb."

"Calm down. I'm trying to drive."

LICENSED TO UNZ:ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Miller brought his fist down on the dashboard. "You've finished me! Ted left an envelope of money in the drawer a couple of weeks ago—the receipts from his shift he was supposed to drop in the safe. I found it when I came on duty."

Jerry made the turn onto the road leading to the motel. "And you kept it."

"And I didn't tell him. Until tonight, it could have been any one of several people who took it. Now he knows it was me."

The younger brother braked gently for a traffic light. "Okay, big deal. How much money?"

"Between four and five hundred."

"Is that all? I've got six hundred with me in cash."

"I'm not taking it."

"We both know you are." Jerry wheeled onto the motel parking lot. "Come in and we'll talk about it. Let's act like grownups."

In the room, Jerry took several large bills and a lot of small ones from his wallet and counted them swiftly, snapping the paper between his fingers. Moe stood with his back turned, watching in the mirror.

"Okay, five hundred and ninety. Take it."

"Shove it."

"I'm getting you out of this mess you claim I got you into. Take it." Jerry turned his brother around and presented the money. When Moe refused to lift a hand, Jerry pressed it against his chest, trying to make it stick to him, lifting Moe's arm to cover it, but Moe resisted and the bills fell to the floor. "Pick it up," Jerry commanded. "It's your money."

"You're wrecking my life!" Moe screamed.

"Keep your voice down," Jerry said hoarsely.

Trying to control himself, Moe imitated his brother's tone. His mind was consumed by such a storm, he could hardly form a sentence. "You came here, who asked you? You made me small. You're always doing it. You've always had more than me!"

"Because I work for it."

"No, that's where you're wrong. Everybody's wrong. You were born with more than me!"

Jerry was on his knees, gathering up the money. Carefully, he arranged the bills in his hand so that the Presidents were all facing the same way. His head was bowed, his expression no less reverent than if he had been at the Communion rail. Moe brought back his boot and kicked his brother hard beside the ear. Jerry fell over on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his side. His eyes were open, fixed, his legs vibrating. Fascinated, Moe kept his eyes on him as he fumbled in the suitcase until he felt the cold steel of the pistol. He got hold of a handkerchief before he picked up the gun with it.

He stood over his brother and fired straight down, twice. Then he dropped the gun, grabbed the money, and ran. He was across the parking lot and walking down the street when he saw the motel-office door open and the manager come out and head tentatively toward the far unit.

It was going to be all right. He would tell the police his brother had dropped him off at home. In Metrola, robberies with violence were commonplace. Jerry's money would go to pay off Ted Casey, putting out that dangerous fire. Miller kept on walking.

The bus-station doors were propped open. He stopped and went inside. How about a ticket to Laceville? It would be appropriate, with his brother suddenly deceased, for him to return home. He might pick up some loose ends of Jerry's business life. The locals would be ready to forgive and forget now that he was bereaved. Miller bought a one-way ticket, good any time.

It was after three o'clock when he arrived at the rooming house. He trod carefully over the squeaking boards outside Iris Damfallon's door. Upstairs, he decided not to sleep. He would take a shower, get dressed in fresh clothes, then go out and have a slow breakfast. His first act when he went on duty at the hotel that afternoon would be to put Casey's money in an envelope. Then he would telephone the motel to speak to Jerry. The manager would probably field the call, or the police. Either way, he would be ready.

Iris Damfallon heard Miller come in and go upstairs. She listened to his movements, then smiled as the shower began to run. What had the naughty boy been up to tonight?

She took her passkey, left her door ajar, and hurried upstairs for a brief look-see. Inside Miller's room, she observed everything just about the same since the last of her frequent inspections. Then she saw the money he had promised her on the dresser. She counted it. Sweet boy, he was coming through these days. There was enough to pay the three weeks owing, the current week, and one in advance. And he was still left with almost a hundred.

Putting the cash in the pocket of her cardigan sweater among the used tissues, she found pen and paper and scribbled a note. "Dear

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Morris: Thanks for the payment. Come downstairs when you've finished bathing. I'll feed you a super omelet. Luv, Iris."

Then she went back downstairs, dropped the money in the little safe hidden away in her closet, and went back to watching an ancient movie starring Wallace Beery.

Miller dried himself from the shower. Getting dressed, he came across Iris's note beside what was left of Jerry's money. He had often suspected she came in here. He would have to go downstairs and get it back. It was essential he pay Casey immediately even though there was no guarantee Ted would keep quiet once he heard about Jerry being killed and robbed.

And what if the landlady made trouble? She might refuse to give the money back. The more fuss he raised, the quicker she'd make the connection when she heard about Jerry. If the cops interviewed her, she could tell them he came home late with a pocket full of cash. And took a shower.

As he got dressed, Miller began to weep. He should never have killed Jerry. The bus ticket was on the bureau along with the remains of the cash. He would go home to Laceville and turn himself in to the police there. He couldn't stand the idea of being punished by strangers.

Inside her apartment, Iris Damfallon was astonished when she heard Miller come down the stairs two at a time and go right past her door. She couldn't imagine why the boy was running in the middle of the night.

DETECTIVERSE

NO BUMBLER HE

by WILLIAM J. CAREW

The mobster's foes all died like flies—
Folks marveled at the ease.
The secret? He made adroit use
Of his trained killer-bees.

© 1989 by William J. Carew.

Ed. Note: William J. Carew, a Canadian, was ninety-eight years old when he sent "No Bumbler He" to EQMM earlier this year. No bumbler *he*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

RUTH GRAVIROS

"Hello, everybody." Warner took his drink to one of the empty Adirondack chairs in the circle of conversation.

"He murdered more women than we'll probably ever know," Elaine was saying. "He's *probably lost count."*

"Don't you believe it," said Meta.

The first fiction, to our knowledge, based on mass-murderer Ted Bundy. Chances are that, as with Lizzie Borden, Jack the Ripper, and others, there will be many more in years to come . . .

TED BUNDY'S FATHER

by RUTH GRAVIROS

With his tendency to tune out the distasteful, Warner Chadason couldn't remember when he'd first heard or read about Ted Bundy. He'd had little personal experience with crime in his sixty-four years—the hit-and-run death of a classmate when he was in grammar school, a series of petty thefts on board ship when he was in the Navy, the burglary of the first house he and Jane had rented when they were married, the non-fatal shooting last summer of the manager of the store where they bought their liquor out on Route 138.

Except for several brief skirmishes in the North Atlantic in 1944, he had enjoyed an unthreatened life, growing up in an affectionate, comfortable home in the same serene town on the Rhode Island coast where he again now lived. His parents and his middle brother were gone, marriage had taken both sisters to distant parts of the country, and his oldest brother, a retired violinist with the Rhode Island Philharmonic, lived in Providence.

Warner's enthusiasms had always been simple. Beyond bringing

© 1989 by Ruth Graviros.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

up a family and his work as a marine biologist, he enjoyed reading, music, and fixing things. Wherever he'd lived since he was a teenager, neighbors had called on him for help with mechanical problems. Far from resenting it, he was sorry when lack of time sometimes made it impossible to see a repair through himself. He savored the hour or so with Jane over drinks before dinner every evening, neglected his health a little, and avoided television, aware that with his passive nature he could easily watch to excess. One evening when he'd discovered himself idly watching *Wheel of Fortune* with Jane and their visiting daughter Pat, whose husband was teaching an evening class, he jumped to his feet, said, "Let me out of here," and headed for his study. "Too much for you, Daddy?" Pat said. Jane laughed. "Can't take it, eh?"

So when *had* his awareness of Bundy begun? The question of capital punishment had always been a bone of contention between Jane and himself. Maybe it was during one of their disputes about it. He was against the death penalty, no matter how horrible the crime or the criminal. "It's not a civilized solution, it doesn't address the problems these people are acting out," was his unequivocal stand. He did recall one evening early in the fall, the appetizing aroma of the lamb roast in the oven urging them toward one last drink before moving to the table, Jane spoke of Ted Bundy as if Warner naturally knew who he was. "If we lived in another part of the country," she said, "one of the girls, or all three of them, could have been his victim. I think you'd feel differently about it then."

Pat was thirty-five, Susan was thirty-three, and Elaine was twenty-eight. "They would have been exactly the right age and type of most of Bundy's victims when he was on his rampage in the Seventies," Jane said.

"The right type?"

"Intelligent, attractive, kind."

Warner frowned. "If I did go for the death penalty because any of the girls were his victim, it would be because I couldn't be impartial."

"You can't keep your distance from such an important issue because it hasn't happened to you!"

"I'm not saying the man shouldn't be locked away for the rest of his life. I'm not even concerned about whether he lives or dies. But taking his life makes monsters of *us*. And it won't bring back his victims."

"He *has* been locked away, Warner, and he's escaped twice. In

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Colorado he jumped out of a second-floor window in the courthouse where he was about to go on trial, and later, when he was recaptured, through the ceiling in his jail cell. And he went on to Florida and killed and hurt some more young women. The ones who lived will never be the same. And even now on Death Row, they have to keep changing his cell because of his attempts to escape. It's all a game to him. Killing the girls was just the beginning. He's playing games with everyone: the police, the press, the psychiatrists, the courts, the taxpayers—"

Jane was the most persuasive woman Warner had ever known. When she walked into the lab at Woods Hole back in 1949 as a summer intern from Vassar, he'd known she'd be capable of dissuading him from some long-held convictions—which she had, for the most part painlessly. It was possible, he sometimes thought, that he'd married her as much for that quality in her as for the powerful physical attraction between them.

Her insistence on planned parenthood as a requisite to their marriage was a case in point. She wouldn't consider starting a family until they had sufficient means to give a child a healthy start in life. It was essential not only to their peace and happiness, she said, but to the peace and happiness of any children they would have—even to the peace and happiness of the community. "The unwanted child is the unwanted citizen," she'd concluded, never afraid of sounding the zealot. It was part of her passion. For all their reserved behavior in public and with the children, they were deeply passionate in private. He was, in his marriage, a very fortunate man, he knew, and Jane had made it clear every day of their years together that she considered herself as lucky as he did.

The children's slowness to marriage Jane attributed to the times—another judgment Warner could see to be true. His graduate students and the children of his friends and colleagues were definitely different in that respect from his generation. They seemed to fall in love just as haphazardly, but they were far more adept at protecting themselves from a chancy future. The cases of buck fever he'd witnessed back in the Forties had no counterpart in the Eighties.

Susan, their only child to marry young, was divorced and living in New Hampshire with her nine-year-old daughter Jess, not far from her former husband, whose lifestyle seemed able to accommodate little more than his carpentry jobs, skiing, drinking with his friends, and occasional "quality time" with his daughter. Pat had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

married at thirty-two. She and Bill, who taught drama at the university, were expecting their first child in March. Elaine, heedless of herself as the family beauty, so far seemed to thrive on her life as a journalist living alone in New York City. Over Thanksgiving weekend—which also happened to be the weekend of Warner's birthday this year—Tom, their fourth child, an associate professor in the humanities at the University of Chicago, had brought home a spirited young Dutch woman and announced their engagement at the holiday dinner. Meta was a psychologist with three years' more seniority on the faculty. Elaine declared herself to be delighted with Tom's catch but concerned that the weight of the family was falling so heavily toward the academic. "What's going on here?" she demanded.

"What can I tell ya?" Tom assumed *Saturday Night Live*'s Dennis Miller's sweet smirk. "Knowledge is power."

"So think gossips and blackmailers, too." She shook her face close at him. "And spooks."

"And journalists," her brother said, sealing it with a kiss to her resolute jaw.

Warner spent a good part of the day after Thanksgiving helping Mark Roper, who had a glamorous house out near the beach, repair the damage after a plumbing leak that had all but ruined the Ropers' holiday. There was a half hour of daylight left when he drove in and saw Jane and most of the others settled in the old Adirondack chairs in the spacious fir-sheltered yard, bundled up in heavy jackets, drinking hot toddies. As he turned off the ignition and climbed out of the car, Jane poured from the thermos at her feet. "Welcome, pilgrim," she said, winding a cloth napkin around the glass and handing it to him.

"Hello, everybody." He took it from her to one of the empty chairs in the circle of conversation. Elaine was saying. "He murdered more women than we'll probably ever know. *He's* probably lost count."

"Don't you believe it," said Meta.

"When he was captured after killing that young girl in Florida, he told detectives he'd killed in six states, not four, and that they should add a digit to the FBI estimate that he was responsible for thirty-six murders."

"I wouldn't object to a change of subject," Jane said, taking the rubber ball Luther, the labrador, had been holding in his mouth for her attention and tossing it toward the woods with a skilled arm.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"His is an amazing case of malignant narcissism." Meta's eyes behind her eyeglasses were bright. Did she know how pretty she was, Warner wondered, the blonde braid below her handknit cap so careless and healthy and young?

"Have they any idea even now what's genetic and what's not?" Jane asked her.

"Ha. We like to think we know. In Mr. Bundy's case, perhaps being born a white illegitimate child in the U.S. in nineteen forty-six when extramarital sex was still taboo, and being raised first in a household where he was led to believe his grandparents were his parents and his mother was his sister, then at the age of three being taken from the couple he thought were his parents by the sister a long distance away, where she soon presented him with a new 'father,' would prompt more than enough trauma to make any genetic factors irrelevant."

"Jack Nicholson grew up with that same mother-sister fiction," Elaine pointed out, "and he seems to have turned it into marvelous creativity."

Tom laughed. "He knows how to *play* malignant narcissism, for sure."

Elaine and Susan were pensive. "I wonder what makes the difference in how people react to desperate beginnings," Elaine said.

"The adults involved, I would think." A breeze blew up and Meta looked reflectively at the swaying trees. "Even if they can't be honest with a child regarding the facts, if they really love the child and show it in appropriate ways it should make a difference."

They celebrated Warner's birthday with dinner at their favorite restaurant in Newport on Saturday night. Through Sunday, the days and nights remained crisp and dry, with an ongoing fire in the living-room fireplace, impromptu conversations everywhere to be found in the house. Only one of these, to Warner's knowledge, disturbed the tranquility of the weekend.

Sunday morning, while the others slept late, only Susan, who was an insomniac, was awake to share breakfast in the sunroom with Warner and Jane. Susan, cursed with depression most of her life, had grown increasingly moody and fractious since her exuberant arrival in her battered Volvo on Wednesday night.

"I can't wait to get back and see Jess," she said gloomily.

"We can't wait to see her at Christmas," Jane assured her. "Have another popover."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

" 'Have another popover.' My daughter finally comes up in the conversation and you say 'have another popover.' "

"I'm sorry, dear. I can't say we've missed her this weekend as much as you must have, but believe me we'd have loved for her to be here. You know we wish you'd move back to Rhode Island."

"She needs her father, too."

"Yes, of course she does. Susan, if we haven't spoken of her as often as we might it's not a case of out of sight out of mind, it—"

"I feel so out of it with all of you, you know?" Susan glared at each of her parents in turn and then focused her misty-eyed anger at the stack of firewood on the drive outside the window. "Last night at dinner I could have barfed at the new bonding going on across the table between Tom and his girl friend and the old bonding going on between Pat and Bill—like they couldn't wait to get back to their respective beds to hash about the rest of us."

"You'll marry again," Jane said—as Warner wished she hadn't even before Susan turned on her, furious.

"That's so typical, Mother! I'm not talking about me, I'm talking about them! You think you understand more than you understand—like Tom's smug little *clairvoyant* from the Netherlands. She has all the answers!" She returned her gaze to the driveway. "My dear brother's going to marry a girl just like the girl that married dear old Dad." Then, with the eye contact of a great actress, she told them both, "I'll leave you to *your* bonding, I've got to pack." She started out of her chair.

"Oh, shut up." Jane reached for her wrist and brought her back down. "Susan, I know that when you hurt, you want to hurt. And I know your father and I have made mistakes as parents and we're still making them—"

"What? Just by being models of contentment?" Susan said sarcastically. "Don't be silly. How could I object to that?"

"You could object to it, dear, if your courageous choice of a husband didn't live up to your expectations. Sam was a decent choice. He's a good man. But he's apparently not ready to be a husband and a father, and he may never be ready. You've dealt with that beautifully—"

"Spare me."

"I'm not being condescending."

"Oh, no? Spare me that, too."

Warner pushed back his chair, brought his half empty plate and coffee cup to the kitchen, and leashed Luther for their morning walk.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When they returned a half hour later, Susan and Jane were still talking intensely but more quietly at the table. As Warner hung up his jacket in the mud room, thinking of how and where and whether to escape, he heard Susan complain that she bore the brunt of Sam's desertion in Jess's eyes, that all mothers bear the burden of a child's blame when a father is abusive or indifferent or absent and there wasn't a *word* for the unfairness of it.

Jane worked as a volunteer two days a week at a local thrift shop, the proceeds of which fed half a dozen charities. She was an insatiable reader and donated, borrowed, and returned books every day she went in. Several weeks before Christmas, she looked up after dinner from a copy of a dogeared paperback she was reading, thought a while, and said, "Bundy's game was easy for him to win because he didn't play fair. His victims weren't aware of the game—they hadn't been brought up to even dream they were being hunted when he came along in his well mannered way with his casts and his crutches and asked for their help."

"What's this obsession everyone has with this guy?" Warner objected. "Mass murder's a pretty morbid subject to begin with, and he's not the only one around."

"Well, for one thing he's due for execution soon. I should think that would be of interest to you, morbid as it is, you're so dead set against capital punishment."

Warner folded his newspaper closed. "What's the book?" He could see the author's name, Ann Rule, on the well cracked binding from this distance, but not the title.

"It's called *The Stranger Beside Me*. The author's written other true-crime books and just happens to have known Ted Bundy since nineteen seventy-one when they were both night volunteers at a suicide-prevention clinic in Seattle. She was an unpaid volunteer, he was a paid work-study student."

"He was born in Seattle?"

"No, he was born in a home for unwed mothers in Burlington, Vermont, in late nineteen forty-six. His mother left him there alone for a few months, then returned to get him and bring him home to live with her parents in Philadelphia."

"And she pretended to be his sister," Warner remembered. "What about his real father?"

"His mother won't say, except that he was a sailor."

"There were a lot of us around then," Warner smiled.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Abortion was illegal, of course, and anyway her family's religion forbade it. When she took him to Washington state, she started to use her middle name, Louise, instead of her first name, Eleanor."

"When did she tell him the truth about it?"

"She didn't. He knew something wasn't right—of course he would, a *sister* taking him away from his *parents?* When he was twenty-two he came back East and traced his birth to Vermont. He went to Burlington, asked for his birth certificate under her name before she married John Bundy out in Washington, and there it was. It had to be some kind of shock."

"I can imagine," Warner said—then, as Jane returned to the book, he thought, No. No, I can't.

As Christmas drew closer and the university suspended classes, Warner helped Jane with the usual errands. Tom was flying to Apeldoorn with Meta to spend the holidays with her family, but Elaine was coming up by train from New York, possibly with a new suitor (but probably not, she said), and Susan was driving down from North Conway with Jess.

One rainy morning, Jane's Olds wouldn't start and Warner drove her to the thrift shop on the Post Road. As she climbed out and reached back for the shopping bag of books she was donating and returning, he spotted the Ted Bundy book at the top. "Let me have a look at that before you return it," he said. That something inside him leapt at the prospect startled him.

That he was interested in reading it at all surprised Jane. "Do you want to pick me up at four-thirty?" she said, transferring the book from the bag to the passenger seat. "We have that heavy food-shopping to do."

He stopped at the lab for some papers and any mail, then drove home, made a cheese sandwich, poured a beer, and went to his study with the book.

Even reading comprehensively, Warner was a fast reader, and reading the book without skipping a detail he was halfway through it by midafternoon. He had stopped more than once to study the eight pages of photographs of Bundy, several of his victims, the scene of one of the crimes, a police sketch made of him in 1974, mug shots of him in 1975. At his most bedraggled, his hair curly and brown, his smile open, he was more attractive than average, even appealing.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Warner could see he'd be very easy to relate to and trust on first meeting.

He was 5'10", which was surprising since his mother—of whom there was no photograph—was only a few inches over five feet. The more Warner read about his pretensions, his loving Mozart and good wines and gourmet food, the more impatient he became with the superficiality of the man. And as he read about the murders he had been convicted of and confessed to, the sicker he felt about Bundy. When the clock told him it was time to pick up Jane, he was relieved to take off his reading glasses and put the book aside.

As he went to the door, he stopped to take a brief, uncharacteristic glimpse of himself in the hall mirror—tall, his crisp salt-and-pepper hair still abundant.

If Bundy's mother was so short, he reflected as he unlocked the car a few minutes later, his height must have come from his father.

When they returned from shopping, Jane heated the pizza they'd picked up for dinner and served it with a green salad and wine. Warner didn't mention the cheese sandwich he'd had for lunch. He'd never had a cholesterol problem, but he was aware he was pushing it.

After coffee, Jane began her serious holiday cooking. She would start with the desserts tonight and tomorrow, and when the holidays rolled around a week from now she would have frozen or wrapped enough hors d'oeuvres, casseroles, bread, cookies, and desserts to see friends and themselves into the new year.

By the time the ingredients were organized and the oven was on temperature, Warner, in his study, was on page 397 of *The Stranger Beside Me:*

"Ted loved *things* more than he loved people. He could find life in an abandoned bicycle or an old car and feel a kind of compassion for these inanimate objects—more compassion than he could ever feel for another human being." For the first time, Warner perceived Bundy involving himself in a genuine interest, not one he manufactured to impress. The skills must have served him well in his escape attempts.

Forty-five more pages and he'd finished. From the kitchen came the sound of foil tearing, of the oven, cabinet, and refrigerator doors opening and closing. Luther was in a deep sleep across the threshold, where he perversely liked to lie. Warner thought a while, then

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

opened the book to study the photographs once again and to reread parts of the second chapter about Ted Bundy's start in life.

Eleanor Louise Cowell. The surname seemed familiar but far from certain. Her illegitimate boy was born on November 24, 1946. Even allowing for the widest obstetrical vagaries in a full-term birth, he was most likely conceived in February of that year.

In February 1946, Warner had spent his last weekend furlough prior to his discharge from the Navy in Philadelphia, off the tanker on which he'd spent most of his almost two years of college-interrupted service. Within the month, he was headed home to Rhode Island, a degree, and, five years later, marriage.

His left hand and forearm were heavily bandaged because of second- and third-degree burns he'd suffered in a fall against a boiler during a heavy storm off Nova Scotia. But his sense of freedom at his imminent release had more than compensated for the pain. He and his best buddy, Alex Kessel, had signed off and begun the weekend together, but Alex, who was engaged to be married in May, went wild on the Friday night and spent most of Saturday sleeping off a whopping hangover in their hotel room.

After seeing to Alex's needs, Warner set out alone to see the city of brotherly love. In the hotel coffee shop, he ordered orange juice, scrapple (which he'd never had before), and eggs. He went on to the zoo, then to the Museum of Art. It was there that he'd noticed this tiny, dark-haired girl, first studying a painting and then studying him. She spoke to him first, asking him about his bandages. She told him how to care for burns and the importance of keeping them clean and the bandages dry. He thought she was a nurse at first, but she said no, she wasn't.

She hadn't, he recalled, answered any of his friendly personal questions in detail. She told him her name was Ellie—if she gave a last name it was lost to him. Remembering her and his feelings now, Warner was newly impressed by her strange secrecy and by the sadness of their predicament. She didn't know what to do with her day and neither did he.

He suggested a movie and then, if she had no other plans, dinner. She had no plans, she said—a movie and dinner would suit her fine. They walked to where she knew the nearest theater to be. *To Each His Own,* which neither of them had seen, was playing, and though it held no attraction for him he could see she was drawn to it, so he reached for his wallet and paid for the best seats.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Afterward, he asked if she would be interested in a shore dinner and she said yes, she loved cole slaw, didn't he love cole slaw? Did he know it was sugar of all things that gave it that special taste?

The seafood restaurant they found was spacious and popular, with roomy booths and sawdust on the floor. They each had a cuba libre while they waited for their fried clams and although Warner couldn't actually remember what they'd talked about, he expected he'd done most of the talking and that it had been about his experiences on board ship, *his* interests, *his* aspirations. She wasn't shy so much as quiet and had given him the impression she preferred to listen and make the occasional—sometimes stupefying—comment.

She lingered so long over her ice cream and coffee, he guessed correctly that she was disinclined to go home and so he suggested that since the weather was on the mild side she, as a native Philadelphian, give him a walking tour.

First they observed the action on Market Street. Many servicemen during the war, Warner thought, had gone berserk on weekend leave because of the danger or boredom they were going back to—now they were going crazy for different reasons. The prospect of the real freedom soon to come, maybe, or the loss of their innocence or of their buddies—or, as in Alex's case, fear of a new commitment. He couldn't begin to say from his own experience what really drove the others.

From the busier streets, Ellie led him out past the length of Franklin Field to a college campus—which of Philadelphia's colleges another detail Warner couldn't recollect. It was while they were wandering there that she took him by complete surprise. They were alone on a path close to a dark two-story red-brick building when she faced him under a low-wattage streetlight, slid a hand under his pea jacket, under his winter middy, under his white T-shirt, and gave him an extended look that told him this was what the day had been leading to and that this was the place.

He followed her back around the side of the building and two steps up behind a row of white pillars to the deserted concrete terrace. Nothing about her previous, almost puritanical presentation of herself—her careful manners, the grey cloth coat over the black jumper and long-sleeved, high-necked white blouse—had prepared him for the ardor with which she met him, or the lust she evoked in him—a lust he'd never remotely, even in his loneliest fantasies, experienced until then.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The blank he draws now of almost everything that night after her climactic *"Oh!"* is terrifying. He does remember not seeing her home—at her insistence—and wondering if she could after all be married, or if it was his uniform she was ashamed of. He vaguely recalls wanting to phone her the next day before he and Alex returned to the ship, but she had left him with no information about herself and asked for none from him. Just as she had asked for no protection.

In 1969, while Ted Bundy was attending classes briefly at Temple University, a young woman was stabbed to death in the stacks of the library. Her murderer was never found.

In July 1971, in Burlington, Vermont, a young woman of twenty-four was beaten, raped, and strangled in her apartment. She had been working that summer at a motor inn directly next door to the home for unwed mothers where Ted Bundy was born twenty-five years earlier. The only indication that Bundy might have been in Burlington at the time, aside from his unaccountability elsewhere, was a notation in the dog catcher's records that someone named Bundy had been bitten by a dog that week.

Were Pennsylvania and Vermont the additional states Bundy meant when he laid claim to two in addition to Washington, Utah, Colorado, and Florida?

"You can't pronounce it centri*fugal* just because you want to," Elaine told Jess from her armchair. "It's cen*trif*ugal. You have to pronounce words properly or you don't get no respect." Jess, tall for nine, sat posture-perfect on the floor by the still aromatic Christmas tree, considering her aunt doubtfully. "Besides, cen*trif*ugal is more fun to say."

"I don't think so."

Elaine bounced her head against the back of the chair. "What can I tell ya, Tom?" she addressed her absent brother. "Knowledge is painful."

"Why *I* don't teach," Susan said from where she lay on the sofa, a chic-funky felt hat crunched low on her head.

"Why I don't teach, too," agreed Elaine. She smiled at Jess. "I just preach, right?" It was Monday afternoon, the day after Christmas. She would be getting an early train back to New York in the morning. Susan and Jess were staying until Friday. She pulled herself

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

out of the chair. "Well, it's my last chance to see the Canadian geese down by the salt marsh. Does anyone want to come with me?"

"*I* do." Jess was on her feet.

"I'm too comfortable," Susan told them, gazing into the fire and then at Elaine. "I'm sorry." Jess was already in the kitchen, asking if she could borrow her grandfather's binoculars.

"Listen, an outing for me is an everyday for you."

"And vice versa."

"So when are you coming to New York again? I've got two bedrooms now. Come and go as you please."

"With Jess?" Susan meant that was unlikely.

"With or without Jess. Either would be wonderful."

She meant it, Susan thought as Jess and Elaine slammed out the back doors. She didn't like remembering how relieved she'd been to find that Elaine was alone when she and Jess arrived on Friday, but she was in a self-forgiving mood and conceded that she had barely recovered from the Thanksgiving-weekend realization that the family was partnering out and she was being left behind. The first shall be last, etc.

Her father had been gone for hours, rescuing some students who had elected to stay over for the holidays and were having a problem at the lab. Her mother was concocting a fish chowder for dinner. The living room was a tangle from the day before. Maybe she could make herself useful and restore some order.

She rolled off the sofa onto her feet, taking off the hat, her gift from Elaine—from Putumayo, whose clothes Susan insisted were made with her specifically in mind. She looked around for a big box for the debris. The largest contained the portable fireplace her father had given her mother to make more comfortable the late-day and -night outdoor sits she liked so much. They might want to keep it in the carton.

Searching further, she found the box with her father's gifts to her—a covered trashcan for the kitchen, because of a problem she was having with mice, inside it an ultrasonic-sound device that was supposed to drive pests away. It would do. She began gathering the discarded wrappings into it, setting aside any genuine ribbon of usable length in case her mother wanted it. If she didn't, Jess would.

"Here, let me help," Jane said, coming from the kitchen and kneeling beside Susan, who was reaching under the tree to realign a tumble of gifts.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I see Father did his Christmas shopping at Payson's Hardware as usual," Susan observed.

"Jess told us on the phone you have '*horrible* mice.' "

Susan shuddered. "They're making me paranoid. I'm all the time looking for sign of them. They're like tiny Houdinis." She stopped and looked at her mother. There had been an abstracted quality about her all weekend that Susan found disturbing. "Is there something wrong between you and Father?"

"*Wrong!*" Jane looked at her, alarmed. She slid some boxes around on the rug and stood up. "I've got to take out the bread," she said with a toss of the head that said "Come with me."

Lifting two hot loaves from the oven, a pair of quilted mitts on her hands, she said, "Something's bothering him. I don't know what it is."

"For how long?"

"A week." She started to glaze the bread with butter and gave Susan a wan smile. "Only a week."

"I hate to admit this," Susan said, inclining her head to her mother's flushed cheek, "but I like it better when you're both happy." She moved across the kitchen to the table and sat. "What did these students call him away for, anyway?"

"Oh, just the autoclave again. They're not used to it. They were sterilizing the equipment for their tests and it malfunctioned. They were in a panic it was going to explode."

"Sounds familiar." How many times over the years Susan had heard her father on the phone saying, "Ground yourself well, unplug it, and I'll come by in an hour or so when it's cooled down."

"They keep building better mousetraps. When are they going to build a better autoclave?" Susan said. Then: "Don't they ever call on someone else to go fix it?"

"Why should they? He always says yes."

"Never be an expert." Susan took a pine branch from the arrangement in an old jar on the table and pinched the berries. "I have a streak of laziness two miles wide. Look at this family. I don't know where you got me."

"You don't?"

"I married Sam because I thought he was as lazy as me. In some ways he is, but he's up for every odd job anybody hands him. Wouldn't it be funny if I really married him because he's like Father?"

When Jess and Susan left at the end of the week, the house seemed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not only emptier than usual, it seemed emptier longer. Warner's dark mood failed to lift and it seemed to Jane that the light had gone out of his eyes, that his skin was unhealthily darker. She wanted to suggest he see a doctor. It would have been ideal to be able to say it was time they both had a checkup, but she had had a thorough checkup as recently as September.

Late one evening toward the end of January, she came downstairs from an evening of estimating the taxes for the thrift shop and found him daydreaming in front of a dreary TV sitcom.

"What's on television?" she asked.

"Nothing too exciting," he said.

Ordinarily she would have clutched her heart and said, "Thank God," but he wasn't up for it and neither was she. Instead she went to the kitchen and brewed some tea for the *Eleven O'Clock News*.

In the middle of which Warner jumped from his chair with a stricken look, told her he thought he'd left an important matter unattended at the lab, he might be late getting back, put on his windbreaker, and was gone.

Dear God, she thought as the beams from the headlights flashed past the window, what now? What devil was driving him so far away from her?

With all the overhead fluorescents on and the night pitch-black beyond the windows, the laboratory was deathlike. Warner had shot the inside lock and gone directly to the autoclave—the highly pressured, overworked soul of the place. The heat it generated was tremendous and most of the faculty and students were afraid of the damage it was capable of. He had seen some very mean burns from it and was himself wary of such accidents after his at sea all those years ago.

Forty-two years ago.

Ted Bundy was to die in the morning at the age of forty-two. It had been announced on the news, as he had expected it would be. What he had not expected was a videotaped interview with him made earlier tonight at the maximum-security prison in Florida. Wearing what looked to be a shrimp-colored T-shirt over a white long-sleeved jersey, his handcuffed hands clasped together in front of his mouth as he listened to the interviewer's questions, he didn't look that age. Nor did he appear arrogant. When the man interviewing him—a minister, did they say?—asked what he thought should be done about mass-murderers like himself, he'd said, "Don't

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

get me wrong, I don't want to die—but I think society should do whatever it has to do to protect itself." Was this a last-minute bid for mercy, Warner wondered, and was the claim he made about his obsession with hard-core pornography being the trigger for the killings as true as only he could know it to be, or was he playing yet another game with a world he did not love? Warner thought it was too simplistic an explanation for him killing as he did. He had to feel such an injustice had been done to him sometime in his life that he couldn't hurt enough to satisfy his rage.

People who favored the death penalty, it occurred to Warner, and those who put themselves on line for it seemed to share an inability to see beyond their terrible grievances. He was certainly no more merciful than Jane. Luckier, perhaps, in a kind of sightedness that either could see beyond what she saw or not as far. Watching the interview with her, he had known they would have to discuss it when the news was over and he couldn't bear the thought of it. Nor could he bear to watch the rest of the interview itself, reading the terror in Ted's face in spite of the medication he must have been given—his mouth had been dry as he gave his carefully deliberated answers. How did a condemned prisoner live through his or her last hours? How did those who loved them? Why were they put through the long night?

The books and articles he had read about Bundy and other mass-murderers since he'd finished *The Stranger Beside Me,* in their attempts to shape some sense from their behavior, had only added to Warner's confusion. He was impatient when they focused on Louise Bundy as at the root of her son's pathology. Even though she had behaved peculiarly with Warner, even though she hadn't wanted any kind of protection, he couldn't excuse himself. True, she'd said no, but he could have insisted. That might have frightened her, but on the other hand she may have needed that kind of reassurance. He'd had an obligation to anticipate the possibility of a child and to protect against it. These past weeks he had looked up James Agee's comment in one of his letters to Father Flye, the Episcopal priest whose long friendship with the author dated back to when Agee was his student at St. Andrew's School in Tennessee. Jane had quoted it to him back when the *Letters* were first published in the Sixties.

"I very much trust in the blindness of nature," he'd written, "but there is a great deal in that blindness which is repellent, too. Begetting a child is at least as serious an act as murder."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They had seen *To Each His Own* that same evening! Olivia de Havilland had won the Oscar for playing the mother of an illegitimate baby in the movie. He had thought it pure soap opera and had in fact fallen asleep through part of it. Ellie, this strange creature from some nether world like the Marianas trench, as he had since come to think of her, had had tears in her eyes when the lights came back up in the theater. But in the movie Olivia de Havilland had put the baby out for adoption—why hadn't Ellie? And why had she left Ted alone for two months at the Vermont home before returning to claim him and bring him to her parents' home in Philadelphia? In one of the books Warner had read, it was estimated that half of all our knowledge is locked in our first year of life. With his fate uncertain those first three months, no one to bond to, and God only knew what happening the remaining nine months, Ted's destiny and that of his victims could well have been decided by his first birthday.

"It's a tragedy for this court to see such a total waste of humanity that I've experienced in this courtroom," the avuncular judge who was the first to sentence Ted to death in Florida had said. "You're a bright young man. You'd have made a good lawyer, and I'd have loved to have you practice in front of me. But you went another way, partner. Take care of yourself. I don't have any animosity toward you—I want you to know that."

That his hours with Ellie had been born of a kind of mild desperation, Warner had only recently acknowledged, and that everything he remembered and read about Louise Bundy told him that marriage with her would have been disastrous, couldn't absolve him of his absence in the boy's formative years. If he had given him a grounding and Ted had become a monster nevertheless, Warner could consider laying more of the blame elsewhere, or on the system. As it was, he recognized now, he was part of the system. The man he had thought he was—considerate, rational husband, father, mentor, neighbor—did not really exist.

Had anyone been observing Warner from outside since his arrival, they would have wondered at his almost catatonic stance before the silent autoclave. But now they would see him straighten and seem to address the problem it presented.

When the unit had last malfunctioned in December, Warner, for reasons he hadn't fully admitted to himself until now, had repaired it only to meet its immediate functional and safety needs. Several

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pipes and the gauge needed replacement rather than first aid. He should have ordered the new parts and seen them installed by now, but he'd done neither. So that now all he had to do was remove the faulty parts, work at the already frayed cord so that it was dangerously exposed, pour water on the floor beneath the unit to simulate escaped steam, plug in the cord, grasp the exposed section, and precede his son to Hell.

The digital clock by the bed read 5:10. Jane had phoned the lab and Warner's office at the university with no luck. She knew he could have been at the lab and purposely not picked up. Instinct also told her not to go looking for him or to call the children.

Was it possible that Warner was lost to her forever? It could be happening, she knew that without having the slightest inkling why, and all she could do was wait for the news from some policeman or learn that this was simply another of the morbid apprehensions that had been hounding her since her sixtieth birthday. There was that, too, after all, to be considered in Warner's recent behavior.

She couldn't concentrate on anything but her thoughts. What Warner called "the great unread" in the bookcase by her side of the bed held no comfort for her tonight.

His ventures as a handyman, she thought. More often than not any more they were an effort at keeping the peace in the families of friends and neighbors who had foolhardily entrusted their cars, TV sets, lawn mowers, and sewing machines to each other. In trying to restore these things to the condition the lender perceived them to have been, he hoped to restore the amiability of the community.

Luther, who had kept a restless watch down by the back door most of the night, came upstairs and in from the hallway, leaning his face on the comforter—comforter himself, his dark gaze over his greying muzzle perplexed and concerned. "I've got two labs now," Warner had told him when he was a puppy, "but only one named Luther."

"I don't know, Luther," she said to him now. "I'd tell you if I knew, but I don't."

All she did know was that Warner had bounded from his chair in the middle of the interview with Ted Bundy. Pore over that as she had, she couldn't for the life of her see any significance in it at all.

She was down in the living room with a cup of coffee, Luther all but on her lap, when she heard a car turn into the driveway shortly after seven. As Luther ran barking to the door, Jane closed her eyes

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

against the life that seemed to fall away from her in her fear of hearing the doorbell. Then there was the sound of the key in the lock and Warner let himself in. Bending wearily to hush Luther, he saw her. She ran to him from the chair and his arms closed around her. Hers encircled him in a grateful stranglehold.

In the pale cast of dawn, he had lost the name of action. But although he hadn't been able to end his life, he was left with serious doubt about the favor that would be to Jane. His recognition that all their life together had been a fool's paradise for him was not something he could shrug off. Had he had any conscience at all before he met her? Why had he aborted his plan for an accident? Did he not want to die? Had he not wanted to kill? Had he not wanted to be killed? There was that theory that those three elements are necessary for the commission of suicide, he remembered. Actually, he had no disposition for any of the three. More than that, though, the conscious thought that had stopped him was the certainty that Jane would know it had been no accident, however feasible it might seem to the police, the community, and perhaps the children.

He buried his face in her hair. They were both crying. And while she would probably never tell him why she was, he thought he knew. It would remain one of the few secrets they would ever have apart.

A few hours later on January 24, 1989, in a bar on the U.S. side of Niagara Falls, an observant stranger might have taken note of one of those ever-young, ever-attractive drifters, full head of curly hair, propped over a beer at the gummy counter, a loud, complacent woman at his side, both occupied with the news on the TV over the bar.

On the screen, crowds cheering a ghostlike white hearse moving through dawn light gave way to a replay of part of the Bundy interview of the night before.

"He sure was a good-looking guy," the woman said. "Just my type." She appraised her drinking partner. "He looks a lot like you, Gus. Look at him, Larry," she said to the bartender, "doesn't he look like Gus?" Larry checked the two faces out and agreed obligingly. "You could be father and son if you were older," she told Gus.

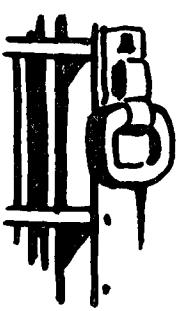
Gus smiled and stroked the stubble on his jaw, flattered at looking like the man on television and at being taken, as always, for younger than he was.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Bastard never had a father," Larry commented, pouring himself the third cup of coffee that morning.

"My God, I can't get over it," the woman said, reaching for a cigarette. "You don't see a resemblance like this every day."

Just like her to go on and on about it, Gus thought, watching the dead man still talking on the television screen. And as he watched, the smile left his face and a penumbrous shadow fell across his calculating, worried eyes.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CLASSIFIED MARKET

ELLERY QUEEN—published 13 times a year. CLASSIFIED AD rate is $3.20 per word—payable in advance—($48.00 minimum). Capitalized words 40¢ per word additional. To be

AUTHOR'S SERVICE

PUBLISH YOUR BOOK! Join our successful authors. Publicity, advertising, beautiful books. All subjects invited. Send for fact-filled booklet and free manuscript report. Carlton Press, Dept. SMK, 11 West 32 Street, New York 10001.

LOOKING for a publisher? Learn how you can have your book published, promoted, distributed. Send for free booklet. HP-5, Vantage Press, 516 W. 34th St., New York, NY 10001.

AUTOMOBILES & MIDGET CARS

IS it true . . . Jeeps For $44 Through The Government? Call For Facts! 1-312-742-1142 Ext. 4674.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS

FREE LIST! Used Hardcover mystery and detective fiction. Dunn's Mysteries, Box 2544, Meriden, CT 06450.

SEND 25¢ for Large Listing of Mystery and Detective Books. Canford, Drawer 216E, Freeville, N.Y. 13068.

100,000 science fiction and mystery paperbacks, magazines, hardcovers. Free catalogs! Pandora's, Box Z-54, Neche, ND 58265-0133.

WORLD'S largest mystery stock. Search Service. Free catalogues. Limited Editions. Aardvarks, 1013 San Domingo Road, Orlando, FL 32808.

MYSTERY FICTION. Free Catalogue. Write: Magna Mysteries, PO Box 5732, Virginia Beach, VA 23455.

FREE CATALOG. Used hardback mystery, crime and detective books. Steve Powell, Dept. DP, *The Hideaway, Bar Harbor, ME* 04609.

FREE CATALOG, used mysteries, hardcover/paperback. MURDER BY MAIL, Dept. 19, 3403 Stearns Hill Road, Waltham, MA 02154.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS—Cont'd

READ "How to Write a Classified Ad That Pulls." Instructive booklet tells how to write an effective classified ad. Also includes certificates worth $5.00 toward a classified ad in any of our publications. For your copy send $3.25 (includes postage) to Davis Publications, Inc., Dept. CL 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

MYSTERY, DETECTIVE true CRIME. SEND One Dollar for Two Catalogues. THOMOLSEN BOOKS, BOX 24, BAYVILLE, NY 11709.

MYSTERY Addicts!! Free Catalogue!! Good, *Inexpensive, Recycled Detective Fiction.* Grave Matters, Box 32192-C, Cincinnati, Ohio 45232.

FOR the best in mysteries: books, tapes, videos, gifts and games, write: MYSTERIES BY MAIL CO., Post Office Box 679, Boonville, California 95415. Free 24 page catalog.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

STAY HOME! MAKE MONEY ADDRESSING ENVELOPES. VALUABLE GENUINE OFFER. 20¢. Write Lindco, 3636-DA Peterson Ave., Chicago, IL 60559.

VENDING MACHINES. No selling. Routes earn amazing profits. 32-Page Catalogue FREE. Parkway Corporation. 1930NO Greenspring Drive, Timonium, Maryland 21093.

NEW IMPORTS: Foreign manufacturers offering direct. Free information. International Intertrade Newsletter, Box 636-AA, Newark, NJ 07101.

EARN Hundreds Weekly. Stuffing Envelopes. No Experience Necessary. Start Immediately. New Era Enterprises, M., 1589 Albion, Rexdale, *Ontario M9V 1B6. Enclose a long Sase.*

MAKE $15,000 IN 30 DAYS! EASY! NO INVESTMENT. FREE DETAILS: FINANCIAL, BOX 1150-DP, FORT WASHINGTON, PA 19034.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

included in the next issue please send order and remittance to I. M. Bozoki, Classified Ad Manager, DAVIS PUBLICATIONS, INC., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES—Cont'd

GET PAID for mailing letters! $200.00 daily. Write: PAASE-PD6, 161 Lincolnway, North Aurora, IL 60542.

TAKE PICTURES for profit. Try our unique methods. Write: Camera Ventures, Box 771, Lamar, CO 81052.

READ BOOKS for pay! $100 a title. Write: PASE-GW6, 161 Lincolnway, North Aurora, IL 60542.

GOOD MONEY! Daily! Processing Mail! Free Supplies, Postage! Bonuses! Information? Rush stamped envelope! Foodmaster-MDC, Burnt Hills, NY 12027.

NEW HOME BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY! Easy. No Investment. Guaranteed! Free Details: Galaway, 27068 LaPaz Rd., Suite 428, Laguna Hills, CA 92656.

BUY IT WHOLESALE

400,000 BARGAINS Below Wholesale! Many Free! Liquidations . . . Closeouts . . . Job Lots . . . Single Samples. Free Details. Worldwide Bargainhunters, Box 1409-IO, Holland MI 49422.

CLOSEOUTS! Discounts! Below wholesale! Liquidations! Freebies! All kinds! Information (Stamp): DDN, Box 20152-D, Ferndale, Michigan 48220.

FIRST Quality Ladies Sportswear and Lingerie at close-out prices. For resale only. Send Sase to: Jo Lynn, 3030 Studley Road, Charlotte, NC 28212.

CATALOGS

FREE Gift and Novelty Catalog. Write: Glocar, Dept. DP 2, 2039 103rd Ave., Oakland 94603.

EDUCATION & INSTRUCTION

WITCHCRAFT Occult Miracle Power Secrets. Gavin and Yvonne Frost. Now accepting students. 1502-AN, New Bern, NC 28560.

EDUCATION & INSTRUCTION—Cont'd

HIGH School at Home. No Classes. Diploma awarded. Low tuition. Send for brochure. Call any time. 1-800-228-5600 or write American School, Dept. 388, 850 E. 58th St., Chicago, IL 60637.

FINANCIAL

DEBTS PRESSING? We'll help now. Bad credit no problem. Licensed/Bonded. Applications to $20,000. Not a loan company. Free application call 1-602-995-9777 or write: Allied Acceptance, Dept. IO, 3003 West Northern #1, Phoenix, Arizona 85051.

GIFTS THAT PLEASE

A gift sure to please—ISAAC ASIMOV's SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE, published monthly. Send $19.50 for 13 issues (includes shipping & postage) to Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, P.O. Box 7058, Red Oak, IA 51591.

HELP WANTED

STAY home and earn money. Assembly work. Full or part time. Many opportunities available. Call today! (813) 576-7500 Ext. 975.

EASY Work! Excellent Pay! Assemble products at home. Call for information 504-641-8003 Ext. 760.

HOBBIES & COLLECTIONS

STAINED GLASS starter kit. Send for free details. Astrosoft, 15006 La Mesa Street, Sylmar, CA 91342.

INVENTIONS WANTED

PROTECT, PATENT AND DEVELOP, Your invention rights before sale. Registered Patent Agent and Licensed Professional Engineer. Send for FREE PATENT INFORMATION Every Inventor Should Have. Richard L. Miller, 12 Parkside Drive, Suite-I, Dix Hills, NY 11746. (516) 499-4343.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LOANS BY MAIL

HIGHER EDUCATION COSTS SOARING! Need money for college? I find sources or your money back! Details: CSB, Box 16484, Fort Worth, TX 76162.

MAILING LISTS

NEW NAMES DAILY! MIXED STATES! IMMEDIATE SHIPMENT! Adhesive Labels; Guaranteed/Hot Line Opportunity Seekers. 200/$10; 500/$15; 1000/$25. Others Available. Advon, Drawer B27, Shelley, ID 83274. Visa/MC/AmEx. 1-800-992-3866.

NEW NAMES! Only sold once! Computerized labels! Guaranteed deliverable! DCO: 1-800-992-9405 Visa/MC/AmEx.

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES

GOOD MONEY! Daily! Processing Mail! Free Supplies, Postage! Bonuses! Information? Rush stamped envelope! Foodmaster-DCM, Burnt Hills, NY 12027.

READ "How to Write a Classified Ad That Pulls," Instructive booklet tells how to write an effective classified ad. Also includes certificates worth $5.00 toward a classified ad in any of our publictions. For your copy send $3.25 (includes postage) to Davis Publications, Inc., Dept. CL 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

CAN YOU STUFF 1000 envelopes for $500.00 weekly? Send six 25¢ stamps. Blume, Box 866714, Plano, TX 75086.

"JANITORIAL BUSINESS MONEYMAKING SECRETS." Free Report! Make $25,000-$100,000+ annually! MBM, Box 159D, Junction City, CA 96048.

WE buy Newspaper Clippings of Wedding Announcements for $1.00 Each. Instructions $2.00. Clippings, Box 491A2, Gatesville, Texas 76528.

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES—Cont'd

"AMERICA'S Biggest Lie!" Believe It? NOT Believing It Can Make You Rich! Free Details From: Brady Hill & Assoc., 2681 Monroeville Blvd., Ste. 480, Monroeville, PA 15146.

MAKE Money working at home selling information by mail. Free details. Rush self addressed stamped envelope: JM, Dept. A, 50 Lenox Ave., Apt. 401, E.O., NJ 07018.

FREE INFORMATION. How to make money with COMPUTERS. Computer Publishing Enterprises, Box 23478, Dept. IO18, San Diego, CA 92123.

IMPORT-EXPORT, start your business, high income, good for entrepreneur, continuous support, investment $8250.00. 1-800-227-8417.

$7,000,000 SPENT DAILY FOR PURE WATER! Unique Highly Profitable Distributorship Available! Filtration System! Free Packet (503) 474-6823.

BECOME $90,000/YEAR BUSINESS DEVELOPER! Complete cassette manual, unconditionally guaranteed, $12.95. Masterstroke, 1509 Hawthorne, Winston-Salem, NC 27103.

$300 A DAY! Taking Phone Orders. People Call You. 304-776-5671 Ext. L47.

$1000/THOUSAND immediately, stuffing envelopes. Free supplies. Rush stamped addressed envelope. Baron Smith, Department 310, 403 Bomar Avenue, Landrum, SC 29356.

OF INTEREST TO ALL

HANDWRITING ANALYSIS. Discover your uniqueness $18 (2000+ word analysis). BIORHYTHMS Learn your high-low mental, physical, emotional cycles. One year $12. Send birthdate. Both reports $25. Ann Jacques, #155, 1268 Main St., Tewksbury, MA 01876.

YOU'LL MAKE MONEY

SAVE MONEY TOO— BY READING and ANSWERING THESE CLASSIFIED ADS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PERSONAL

SINGLE? Widowed? Divorced? Nationwide introductions! Refined, sincere people. 18-80. Identity. Box 315-DT, Royal Oak, Michigan 48068.

ORIENTAL ladies seeking correspondence, marriage. Presentations by American husband, Filipina wife. Asian Experience, Box 1214T, Novato, CA 94948.

BEAUTIFUL GIRLS SEEK FRIENDSHIP AND MARRIAGE. American—Mexican—Philippine—European. Photo selection FREE! Latins, Box 1716-DD, Chula Vista, CA 92012.

BEAUTIFUL, ENGLISH SPEAKING, FILIPINAS want men of all ages as Life-partners. VIDEOS AVAILABLE. PAL, 51 BLANCA, CO 81123-0084.

NATIONWIDE Singles Magazine. Send Name, Address, Age. Send No Money. Exchange, 1817 Welton #1580, Denver, Colorado 80202.

SINGLE SMOKERS—MEET OTHERS! Nationwide Network. WRITE: INCURABLE ROMANTIX, P.O. Box 6919, New York, NY 10128.

RECORDS, TAPES & SOUND EQUIPMENT

PORTABLE Recording Studio & Equipment (Complete) $3,495 plus shipping. A proven moneymaker. Call 216-382-5302.

SALESMEN-DISTRIBUTORS

AD SPECIALTY SALES OPENINGS. 80 Years in the Advertising Specialty and Calendar Industry have taught us the best Salespeople are Self-Starters who prefer the independence of straight commission sales over someone else calling the shots. NEWTON MFG. CO. offers that person the BEST Home Office Support in the industry! Ask around! Weekly Commissions, 24 Hour Toll-Free Message Center, a Generous Cash Bonus and the Top Sample Program in the Business. All orders Acknowledged. Shipping Notices provided and MUCH MORE! No Investment, No Collections. Full or Part-Time. You're your own Boss. Contact Kevin Peska, NEWTON MFG. CO., Dept. HIOC11, Newton, Iowa 50208.

SONGWRITERS

POEMS WANTED. Songs recorded and published. Radio-TV promotions. Broadway Music Productions, Box 7438-DA, Sarasota, FL 33578.

TAPES AND CASSETES

OLDTIME radio programs. Mysteries, adventure, suspense, science fiction, comedies. Classic tapes. Free catalogue. Carl D. Froelich, Heritage Farm, New Freedom, PA 17349.

WIN $$$ WITH SKILL

WIN $$$ in skill contests. Win up to $5,000. TYC Company, 400 Wilson Drive, Midland, MI 48640.

For Greater Savings...Results...and Profits...

PLACE YOUR AD IN ONE OF OUR SPECIAL COMBINATIONS:
Combo #1, Combo #2, or Combo #3.

Each combination is designed to give your ad the largest audience available.

Each combination offers you a Special Discount Rate.
For further information write to I. M. Bozoki, Classified Ad Manager, Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG

ELLERY QUEEN

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING ORDER FORM

Send to **ELLERY QUEEN MAGAZINE**
Classified Advertising Department Suite 1401
380 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017

15 WORD MINIMUM
Only $48.00 for 15 Words or Less
$3.20 each additional word
Capitalized words add—40¢ per word
SAVE 15% WITH 3 CONSECUTIVE MONTHS SAME COPY ORDER

DEADLINE: Copy and payment must be in by the 5th day of the third preceding month for issue in which ad is to appear.

(PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE)

YOUR NAME_____

FIRM (NAME IN AD)_____

ADDRESS_____

CITY_____ **STATE**_____ **ZIP**_____

PHONE:_____ **DATE:**_____

YOUR SIGNATURE_____

_____ Words at $3.20 each $ .....

_____ Capitalized word at .40¢ each
Total amount for 1 ad $ _____

15% Savings with 3 Consecutive Months Discount

(a) Multiply one ad total $_____ x 3 = $ _____
(b) Multiply total amount on above line by x .85
(c) Total amount for 3 ads $ _____

(Example: One 15 word ad $48.00 x 3 months – $144.00 x .85 – $122.40)

$_____ is enclosed for _____ insertion(s) in the _____ issue(s) _____ Heading

(FOR ADDITIONAL WORDS ATTACH SEPARATE SHEET)

(1) **$48.00**	(2) **$48.00**	(3) **$48.00**	(4) **$48.00**	(5) **$48.00**
(6) **$48.00**	(7) **$48.00**	(8) **$48.00**	(9) **$48.00**	(10) **$48.00**
(11) **$48.00**	(12) **$48.00**	(13) **$48.00**	(14) **$48.00**	(15) **$48.00**
(16) **$51.20**	(17) **$54.40**	(18) **$57.60**	(19) **$60.80**	(20) **$64.00**
(21) **$67.20**	(22) **$70.40**	(23) **$73.60**	(24) **$76.80**	(25) **$80.00**
(26) **$83.20**	(27) **$86.40**	(28) **$89.60**	(29) **$92.80**	(30) **$96.00**

HOW TO COUNT WORDS: Name and address must be included in counting the number of Words in your ad. Each initial or number counts as 1 word. Mark Holly, 380 Lexington Avenue, New York, New York 10017 7 WORDS. Zip codes are not counted. Phone # 2 Words. Symbols used as keys are charged for. City or State count as 1 word each. Garden City, New York 2 words. Abbreviations such as C.O.D., F.O.B., P.O., U.S.A., 7x10, 35mm count as 1 word. (P.O. Box 145 count as 3 words) Webster's International Unabridged Dictionary will be used as our authority for spelling, compound words, hyphens, abbreviations, etc. **Please make checks payable to ELLERY QUEEN MAGAZINE.**

NEXT ISSUE...

12 *NEW* stories—including

CLARK HOWARD (about hanging it on a limb)

ROBERT BARNARD (about the wages of unemployment)

ANTONIA FRASER (about a full moon)

EDWARD D. HOCH (about Dr. Sam Hawthorne)

PETER LOVESEY (a case involving butterflies)

plus a distinguished reprint by PATRICIA MOYES

WILLIAM F. BATTISTA ..... *Publisher*
ELEANOR SULLIVAN ..... *Editor*
RUSSELL ATWOOD ..... *Associate Editor*
TERRI CZECZKO ..... *Art Director*
RON KULINER ..... *Associate Art Director*
CAROLE DIXON ..... *Production Director*
DENNIS JONES ..... *Newsstand Operations Manager*
BRIAN McKEON ..... *Circulation Planning Director*
CYNTHIA MANSON .... *Director of Marketing & Subsidiary Rights*
CHRIS DORBANDT ... *Newsstand Marketing & Promotion Manager*
FLORENCE EICHIN ..... *Contracts Manager*
VEENA RAGHAVAN ..... *Promotions Manager*
IRENE BOZOKI *Classified Advertising Manager*
A. BRUCE CHATTERTON *Advertising Director*
LISA FEERICK ..... *Advertising Services*

Advertising Sales Office **NEW YORK 212-557-9100**

JOEL DAVIS
President

FRED EDINGER
Senior Vice President Finance

MARY TZIMOKAS
Vice President Circulation

CARL BARTEE
Vice President Manufacturing

KENNETH MARGIOTTA
Controller

ELLERY QUEEN
Editor-in-Chief (1941–1982)

Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine. Vol. 94, No. 5, Whole No. 562, November 1989. Published 13 times a year, every 28 days, by Davis Publications, Inc., at $2.00 a copy. Annual subscription $25.97 in U.S.A. and possessions; $29.50 elsewhere, payable in advance and in U.S. funds. Allow 6 to 8 weeks for change of address. Editorial and Executive Offices, 380 Lexington Ave., N.Y., N.Y. 10017. Subscription orders and mail regarding subscriptions should be sent to Ellery Queen, P.O. Box 7052, Red Oak, Iowa 51591. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional mailing offices. Canadian third-class postage paid at Windsor, Ontario.

© 1989 Davis Publications, Inc., all rights reserved. Protection secured under the Universal Copyright Convention and the Pan American Copyright Convention. ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE® is the registered trademark of Ellery Queen. Printed in U.S.A. Submission must be accompanied by self-addressed stamped envelope. The Publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts.

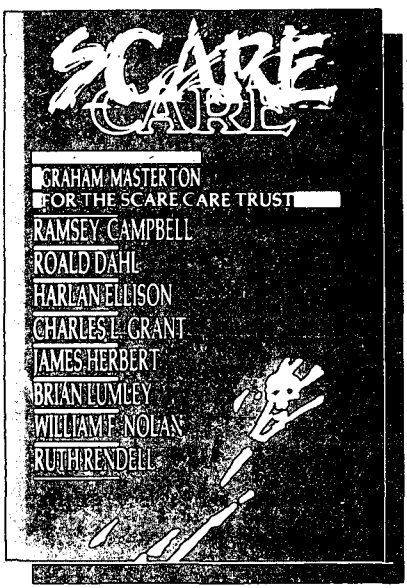
POSTMASTER: Send Change of Address to Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, P.O. Box 7052, Red Oak, IA 51591. In Canada return to 1801 South Cameron, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3E1. ISSN: 0013-6328. For back issues, send $3.50 to Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, P.O. Box 40, Vernon, NJ 07462.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Horror's most visionary writers contribute their talents to help children everywhere.

SCARE CARE

EDITED BY GRAHAM MASTERTON FOR THE SCARE CARE TRUST



If SCARE CARE had only been an anthology of remarkable horror stories by the finest writers in the field, it would have been a milestone. It includes over three dozen harrowing new tales by such writers as Ramsey Campbell, Harlan Ellison, Roald Dahl, James Herbert and Charles L. Grant.

But SCARE CARE is far more than that. It's a special benefit edition to aid the Scare Care Trust, an organization dedicated to raising money to help abused and needy children everywhere. All profits derived from the sale of this book will be donated to the trust.

"An excellent notion! I remember how it was to be a child, and I'm glad to see someone standing up for the children." —Piers Anthony

$19.95 ★ 0-312-93156-5 ★ 416 pages ★ JUNE

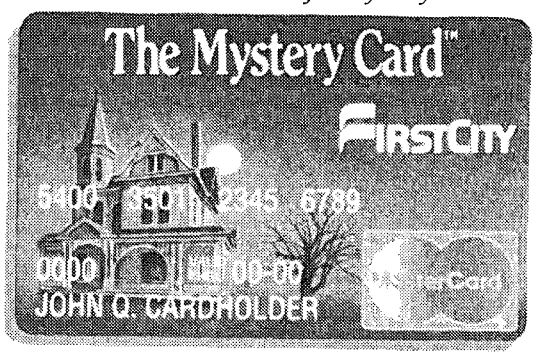
TOR hardcovers are distributed nationally by St. Martin's Press.

TOR® HORROR

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Take the Mystery Out of Credit Cards

With the First Credit Card for Mystery Readers!



As a reader of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* you enjoy red herrings, twisted endings, and the surprises that make mystery reading such a pleasure. But no one likes to be surprised in areas of personal finance.

With all the confusion surrounding credit cards these days...interest rates, grace periods, and other details...we're pleased that First City is offering a MasterCard to our readers that will not require you to hire a private investigator, or an attorney, to help you decipher the benefits.

"The Mystery Card"

The unique gothic mansion design expresses your interest in finding clues and solving mysteries.

Your use of "The Mystery Card" will help solve one of the major medical mysteries of our time...the cure for diabetes.

Every time you buy anything with "The Mystery Card", *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* will contribute a percentage of the price to the pioneering medical research of the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation.

Your use of "The Mystery Card" can help the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation discover the clue to the cure of diabetes!

"The Mystery Card" is a MasterCard accepted by six million MasterCard merchants worldwide. There's no mystery about its value.

- **There's no annual fee for one full year!**
- A competitive variable interest rate of prime plus 7.7%.
- 25-day interest-free grace period on purchases when your balance is paid in full each month.
- Instant Cash at ATMs and bank locations throughout the world.
- $250,000 Travel Accident Insurance at no extra cost.

AND

- **Exclusive discounts on mystery books and related merchandise.**

If you would like an application, please call (800) 641-7878.

FIRSTCITY.

First City Bank - Sioux Falls, N.A.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

How fast can YOU solve Charlie Chan's most challenging cases? Find out ...with the

One of the most popular detectives who ever caught a crook or collared a killer, Charlie Chan has been thrilling generations of amateur sleuths and movie buffs since the 1930s. If you're an old fan, you'll love reliving your favorite case... If you're a new fan, you're about to experience police work at its best!

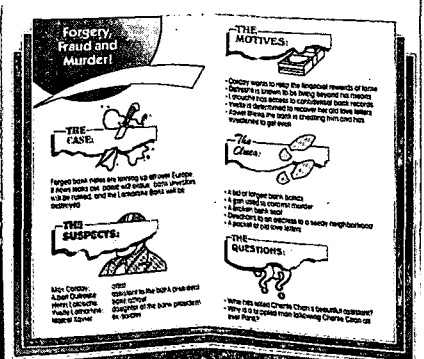
The CHARLIE CHAN COLLECTION includes seven top-notch mysteries complete with CASE DOSSIERS in special packaging that provide suspects, motives, clues, and questions.

Packaged in handsome "collector" editions, at only **$19.98** each they're a steal!
(But don't let Charlie hear you say that.)

CHARLIE CHAN KOLLEKTION!

Now on video for the first time!

THE CHARLIE CHAN COLLECTION
CHARLIE CHAN AT THE OPERA
CHARLIE CHAN AT THE WAX MUS
CHARLIE CHAN IN PARIS
CHARLIE CHAN IN RIO
CHARLIE CHAN'S SECRET
CASTLE IN THE DESERT
MURDER OVER NEW YORK



Only from Key Video!

KEY VIDEO

Suggested Retail

LICENSED TO WIZ ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED